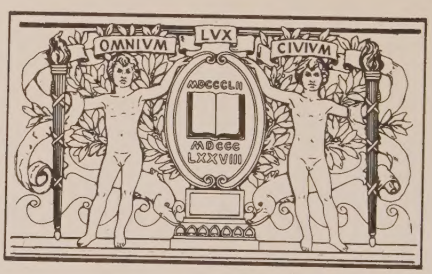

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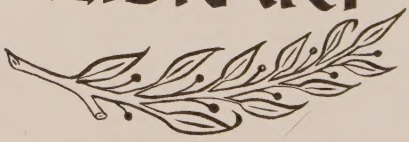

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...th of Sherman Is a Bitter Loss to American Criticism

The death of Stuart Pratt Sherman is a bitter loss to American criticism. Honest, fearless, with a sense of humor that was at the same time gentle and caustic without being vindictive, and with a background of real scholarship, such critics as he was are not found in many a day's journey, nor many a year's.

There was something fundamental and rooted about his criticism. There was nothing of the present day "smartiness" about it. He never was taken in by the glitter. If he said that he believed in a book you could be sure that he believed in it not because he knew the author or had been the discoverer of that particular kind of book, and therefore was its champion willy nilly, or because there was a facile brilliance to the work. He believed in it because it fulfilled his standards of great writing and for no other reason on earth.

Midwestern he was, and a teacher in the English department of a state university (Illinois) when he went to New York to be literary editor of the Herald-Tribune. And the finest qualities of the environment he left decorated the life that he went into. He was never a New Yorker—in the critical sense. He was too young to die.

* *

By STUART SHERMAN

THE MAIN STREAM
CRITICAL WOODCUTS
POINTS OF VIEW
THE GENIUS OF AMERICA
AMERICANS

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

THE MAIN STREAM

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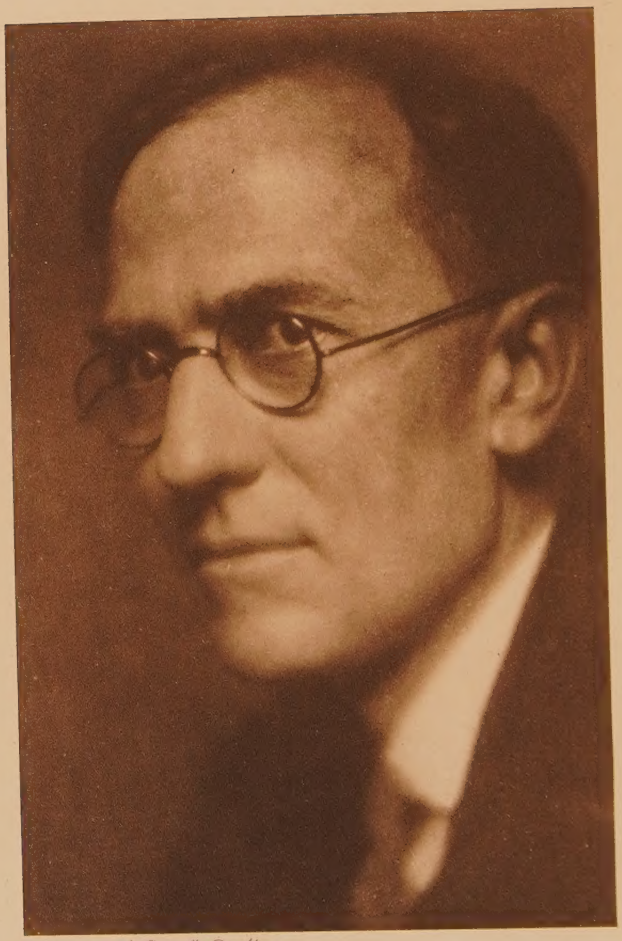

From a portrait by Paris Mac Donald

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INTRODUCTION

The first duty of a commentator on current literature, as it appears to me, is to present a fairly full and veracious report of what is going on. He will have his own convictions regarding the permanent value of various parts of the contemporary spectacle; and, inevitably, they will "show through" in his report. But his first duty is not to exploit his own predilections; it is rather to understand the entire "conspiracy" of forces involved in the taste of his day. What is "important" now and never may be so again has a charm for him which he would think it a kind of baseness and disloyalty not to admit and record.

He conceives of literature perhaps as a river, himself as a scout seeking for the main channel of intellectual and emotional activity in his own tract of time, recurring constantly to the point where the full rush of living waters comes in from the past, and eagerly searching for the point where the flood breaks out of the backwater and through the dams, and streams away into the future. He is always sounding and essaying to discover where the water is deepest now. He tries to characterize the most promising navigators, their crafts, their cargoes. When he concerns himself with historical figures, he seizes upon those who, by reason of some vital congruity, are felt by us as "modern" and pertinent to our present occasions.

In the back of his mind is the knowledge that an annual chronicle so composed will outweigh the sum of the diurnal entries; his work will come together in the end, and constitute a picture of his age and its tendencies.

—From the Introduction to Critical Woodcuts.

The essays in this volume were all printed in "Books," the literary supplement of the Herald Tribune, in 1924, 1925, and 1926.

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THE MAIN STREAM

DISINTERESTED? NO!

One of the critical fraternity which strives to keep the literary columns of "The London Times" in the grand style, a writer familiar with Plato and not unacquainted with Croce, suggests assembling the leading critics of England in a comfortable wine vault—Professor Saintsbury in the midst of them—and setting them to discuss, over the sandwiches, what pure or ideal criticism is and what it does. In a country abounding in wine vaults, an occasional debate on an abstraction as high and dry as "the ideal of criticism" may be tolerated by the public and relished by the participants. But in America, for one reason and another, it is hard to find any man who is even civilly interested in any abstract ideas—except his own. And as for a public debate on perfect criticism I fear that "our people," as a good-natured Yankee traveler remarked to an Englishman on hearing for the first time of the doctrine of infant damnation—"our people would never stand for that."

Our American indifference to theory is rather a pity, for we all hanker after perfection, we all desire to surpass ourselves—it is the best trait we have; and the introduction of pure theory into the field of practice is sometimes a great stimulus to the search for perfection. The popular objection to entering the domain of pure ideas is, of course, that as ideas become pure they become impenetrable by the gross fact-consuming mind

of the average unmetaphysical sensual man. A more sophisticated objection is that as ideas of the æsthetic and moral order approach philosophical purity there seems frequently to be nothing in them; so that perhaps the safest advice to the student of goodness and beauty is to shun abstract definitions and to live in an amorous intimacy with good people and beautiful things. In the presence of some of the recent attenuations of critical theory, however, one is almost forced to reconsider what there is, precisely, in the notion that perfect criticism should be perfectly disinterested.

It has long been held that disinterestedness is a quality of good criticism; and in a loose, popular sense, of course it is. Disinterestedness as a catchword has done valiant service, just as liberty, equality and fraternity have done valiant service. It has been a watchword on the side of the angels. It came into vogue during the last century as a protest against the criticism that "killed John Keats," in the bad old days when poetical butterflies were broken on political wheels, when reviewers were the hired banditti of the Whig and Tory parties, when science was bombarded by the church militant, when Grub Street was infested with venial and malicious souls who had never heard that truth is beauty, but shamelessly puffed an author when his wife asked them to dinner and damned him when she didn't—in short, when the publication of a book was an accepted signal for the release of all manner of personal and factional prejudice—as an opportunity for propaganda on the one hand and vengeance on the other.

In this situation it became obvious to certain lucid minds that critical writing, so called, could possess no

more permanent value than political oratory or the diatribes exchanged between nations at war. It could possess authority only for the side which uttered it. What these lucid minds desired was a statement which should command assent from the judicious. And that, they perceived, could be made only from a non-combatant position. They recommended accordingly the creation of a zone of neutrality. A critic who aspires to speak with authority must begin by demonstrating that he is nobody's Swiss guardsman, nobody's hired man. He must begin by emancipating himself from all "vested interests" which commit him to a position before he has examined it. He must cut himself loose from the church, from the state, from society and its institutions at any point where society, or the state, or the church forbids his mind to play freely about it and to tell the truth as God gave him to see the truth. No one is likely to write much criticism of permanent value till he has taken these preliminary steps. Criticism begins there. In the sound popular sense disinterestedness in criticism means that the critic is an independent inflexibly honest man who has sought a place of judgment at the center of humanity instead of in the suburbs and eccentric chapels and dungeons of the mind.

Now as soon as pure theorists get hold of this useful, this indispensable notion of the free mind, they tend to refine upon it till there is no mind there. They appear to believe that since detachment from second-rate ideas is good for the critic, detachment from all ideas must be better still. By carrying the process of emancipation to a "logical" conclusion, they leave the ideal critic stand-

ing not inside all human interests, at the center, but outside all human interests, buzzing in a moral vacuum, where judgment, which Brunetière called "one of the four ends of man," is impossible. Matthew Arnold, himself one of the most judicial of critics, and a man wisely wary of abstractions, supplied a starting point for subtle metaphysical developments when he declared that criticism endeavors to see "the thing as in itself it really is." Gaston Paris, refining on the idea, taught his disciples that "criticism comes before its object without preconception or ulterior purpose." And now Signor Croce, seeking to purify still further the idea of disinterestedness, announces that "criticism is the serene historical narration of that which has happened."

Criticism serenely narrating what has happened, criticism coming before its object without preconception or ulterior purpose—we all perhaps slip into that abstract style from time to time; but I find that when any one else uses it, I begin to nod. I lose the connection. I no longer preserve from point to point a lively sense of the truth of what I am hearing. I become rawly materialistic and hopelessly skeptical about the very existence of criticism. It is ghostly business, this criticizing without preconception or ulterior purpose. It might leave some record on the photographic plates of Sir Oliver Lodge; but in sober seriousness I have never seen criticism coming before a work of art without preconception or ulterior purpose and reporting anything whatever.

In order to emerge from shadowland and recover my sense of reality, I substitute an agent for a disembodied

spirit, and write: "The critic comes before a work without preconception or ulterior purpose." Interesting if true. But what practicing critic does that? Can we press a little closer to reality? Yes. Substitute for the species an individual and boldly write: "I come before a work without preconception or ulterior purpose." Now we are getting somewhere. Now we are coming alive. The statement has hardly a grain of truth in it; it reeks with error; it crumbles with falseness. I come before a work of art full of preconceptions and ulterior purposes. I come with all my knowledge, beliefs, unanalyzed prejudices, intuitions and emotional capacity; and I say to the work of art: "Do to me what you can, whatever you can: seduce and enchant me, depress and degrade me, inspire and instruct me, transform all my preconceptions, if you can"; and it is my ulterior purpose to make such a report of what this work of art has done to me that my readers will feel and believe about it as I do. My narration of what it has done to me may be as "serene" as Signor Croce says that it should be, but it will be serene with the intention of getting my report accepted.

There is nothing, I think, singular in this critical practice; so far from being singular it has been almost universal among practicing critics as distinguished from the metaphysicians of criticism. Dr. Johnson, for example, approached a work of art with the preconceptions of a Georgian classicist and with the ulterior purpose of making Georgian classicism prevail. Arnold came with a more flexible and various humanism and with the ulterior purpose of pulling out some unused organ stops in

the middle-class Englishman. Pater besieged a work of art with the preconceptions of a refined and highly complex hedonist and with the ulterior purpose of persuading his generation to seek felicity in the refinement and intensification of their sensations. Mr. Chesterton, with preconceptions of a somewhat regenerated and poetized John Bull, and Mr. Shaw, with the preconceptions of a puritanized superman, both seek to make their preconceptions prevail. The criticism of Anatole France and Rémy de Gourmont tends to create elegant epicureans; that of Maurice Barrès, now reverenced in France as a demigod, tends to produce flaming nationalists. The list might be prolonged indefinitely by enumerating the preconceptions and ulterior purposes of our own critics, from Professor Babbitt, with his preconception that romanticism is of the devil and must be destroyed, to Mr. Van Wyck Brooks and Mr. Ludwig Lewisohn, with their ulterior purpose of knocking the shackles from the Rotarian mind. I cannot call up the name of a single critic of weight in the gallery who would be content to have his work described as a "serene historical narration of that which has happened."

And so instead of admitting with Major Spingarn that the old "moralistic" criticism is defective, and is about to become obsolete, I am inclined to maintain that the new aesthetic theory is defective and shows little promise of coming alive. Nothing discredits the ideal so fatally as its identification with the unreal and the impossible; and frankly this criticism without preconceptions or ulterior purposes appears to me impossible and unreal. It is criticism devoid of its *raison d'être*. The true ideal should be a goal toward which actual criti-

cism tends, as it grows in fullness, richness and utility. As a matter of fact, we value our critics in proportion to the soundness and the abundance of their preconceptions and in proportion to the adequacy of their ulterior purposes.

CARL SANDBURG'S LINCOLN

LINCOLN, unlike the Father of his Country, left no classicized image for our iconoclastic and Rodinesque biographers to shatter. One has always been able to say of him that his hair was rumpled, his feet large, his mouth crooked, or his stock ill-adjusted, without ruffling the feelings of his admirers or raising suspicion of treasonable designs against the Republic.

When his Virginian grandfather and his neighbors followed Boone into Kentucky and took to wearing moccasins and buckskin shirts eighteenth-century decorum was doomed and the Roman dignity of the Washingtons and Adamses went glimmering. Old Hickory Jackson smoked a corncob pipe in the White House. Zachary Taylor's rough-necked soldiers, tanned in Texas and Mexico, called him Old Rough-and-Ready. Lincoln was a relatively late arrival in the new school of Western statesmen. While he was callousing his palms with rail splitting horny hands were already *de rigueur* for the leaders of a people who were blazing their way westward. In 1855 Whitman's "Shun delicatesse" was a maxim collected from practice and "Leaves of Grass" was a record, not a prophecy, of pioneers.

The traditional Lincoln may be re-shaded at discretion, but in the main features he requires little revision. For he registered himself firmly and deeply upon modern realistic minds, supplemented by a photography

which had not yet developed the "touching-up" process. When Southern gentlemen declared that democracy was played out in Europe and in America his own partner saw the six-foot-four rawboned Illinoisian pull his long legs off from his desk in the Springfield law office and, picking up his stovepipe hat and his faded umbrella, go out and save the Union and emancipate the slaves. Observers on the spot—Nicolay, Hay and Herndon—set him down in his black-and-white habit as he lived, or in his shirt-tail, if they caught him mournfully mooning around the executive mansion at midnight. They emphasized rather than softened the angularity of his physical make and the trenchant and ineffaceable carving with which nature in tragic mood had delineated his character in his face.

As for the inward beauty of the man, his almost flawless exemplification of the Pauline *caritas,* his contemporaries saw him as clear and high—the clear-eyed of them—as we see him now. It was on the day of his death that Garfield declared him "the noblest and most generous spirit that ever put down a rebellion on this earth." And it was in the same year that a Cambridge Brahmin called him "the first American" and a Manhattanese chanted his dirge as "the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands."

Perhaps nobody has read—certainly I have not—all the 2,680 books and pamphlets on Lincoln which are now listed in the Fish-Oakleaf bibliography. But the chief biographers speak respectfully of one another. The later ones gratefully acknowledge the substructure of Nicolay and Hay and Herndon, with some reservations regarding the latter's defective memory and his

malice toward Mrs. Lincoln and a certain taste that he had for melodramatizing a situation. And my guess is that the general effect of at least 2,600 of these additions has been corroborative and cumulative, so that a reader who undertook to digest them all would be in a mood to appreciate the colossal Barnard statue, showing the familiar traits—the physical grotesqueness, the humor, the sadness, the gentleness and the strength—enormously magnified by the concurrence of many hands, yet right enough in the total impression of a home-grown national figure against the sky.

In recent years we hear a good deal, however, of a "Lincoln myth." When people use that phrase they ordinarily mean one of two things. They may mean to discredit democracy by intimating that Lincoln does not belong where Lord Charnwood recently ranked him, "among the great men of the earth." They may mean to insinuate that he was a vastly overrated man who was elected to the Presidency because of the deficiencies which he shared with the electorate. The idea inevitably attracts the paradoxer, but it is too thin to make a nourishing meal, like the ethereal soup made of the shadow of a pigeon which had died of starvation. It might be compared with the attempt of political enemies in Lincoln's lifetime to persuade the world that he was a third-rate country lawyer, a human gorilla, and a Uriah Heep. But I shall not discuss this notion because I hold with Lincoln that when a man shows himself wholly insensible to the force of facts there is nothing for it but to stop his mouth with a corncob.

The second and quite discussible sense in which people speak of a "Lincoln myth" is that the popular

imagination conceives of him as far more uncouth, untutored and destitute of social advantages than he actually was. The notion that he was not an ill-cultivated man is supported by a generation of research, which has disclosed among other things his membership on a dance committee.

In 1896 and again in 1900 Ida M. Tarbell published the results of a wide and timely inquiry for fresh facts among hundreds of Lincoln's surviving contemporaries. Since that time there has been a vast and continuous interrogation of witnesses and a ransacking of newspapers and state and national archives by the Illinois State and the Chicago Historical societies and by countless individuals who have been producing detailed and critical studies of Lincoln's paternity and ancestry, his homes and his travels, his readings and education, his relations with women, his attitude on all subjects, his speaking tours in New England and elsewhere, the Lincoln-Douglas debates, the story-telling, the law practice, the record in the Illinois Legislature and in Congress, the national statesmanship, the warcraft, and the literary style.

Recent biographers—Lord Charnwood in his critical study of the statesman, 1916; Stephenson in his somewhat mystical "Lincoln" of 1922; Miss Tarbell in her fresh harvest of 1924, "In the Footsteps of Lincoln"; William E. Barton in his third considerable contribution, his two-volume "Life" of 1925, and Mr. Sandburg in 1926—concur in abandoning the attempt to enumerate all their sources; but all of them contribute fresh facts or stimulating interpretation or both, and all of them tend strongly toward the destruction of the second form of the "myth."

To put the matter briefly, Lincoln was not half so plain and simple and humble as he is made out when his encouraging rise from the log cabin is pictured to the Russian peasantry. It is only in a figurative sense that he can be considered a new man created of "sweet clay from the breast of the unexhausted West." Genealogical investigation has confirmed what his physiognomy revealed: that he was not of "poor white" stock. The strong sculpture of his head denoted "race," however derived; and now we are to think of his leadership of a company in the Black Hawk War as the expectable result of his "race," since he was the fifth captain in a line of Lincolns which runs back into seventeenth century Massachusetts.

His education may have lacked trimmings, what though he dabbled in poetry and at least looked into a Greek grammar; but he had disciplined himself long and strenuously in a masculine curriculum. He mastered grammar, logic, mathematics, surveying, oratory, debate and the law, not to speak of the Gospel, Shakespeare, Bunyan and Burns. From early manhood he was both politically and socially ambitious; he was early accepted in the best political society of the state; he married a wife with a temper, to be sure, but intelligent, ambitious and socially fit for cotillions and the Governor's ball.

By straight, hard thinking, square dealing and a disposition admirably controlled yet eminently companionable and entertaining, he was a notable man twenty years before he was President. He was in excellent odor among his own people. He had done effective work in the Legislature and had made much more impression in

Congress than used to be thought; Mr. Sandburg gives a lively account of his Congressional terms. The dark horse that ran so hard in 1860 was less obscure than the schoolboy conceives. Well-informed persons knew him for a shrewd, cautious, conservative politician who had followed closely in the footsteps of Henry Clay; for the foremost lawyer in the West; for the ablest debater in the Whig party, tested in a contest with another Springfield lawyer who happened to be leading the Democratic party.

Carl Sandburg's big biography is wholly devoted to showing Lincoln in his times before he went to the White House. It may be considered as the latest synthesis after a generation of research. It is thoroughly well nourished on the enormous new Lincoln literature. It incorporates the new facts and includes the new lights and shadings. In addition Mr. Sandburg furnishes adequately the technical justification or "apology" for another book; he has had access to a long, quaint letter from Mrs. Lincoln to her husband; he has met with sixty-five unpublished letters and papers in Lincoln's handwriting; he has been able to illustrate copiously from rich collections of photographs, maps, etc.—and besides all that he was born in Lincoln's country and for thirty years or more, he tells us, he has had it in his heart to make "a certain portrait" of him.

The effect of this portrait is vital and stimulating. The composition of it is of an interesting complexity. One easily distinguishes certain dominant features of the treatment; an extraordinarily vivid and sympathetic account of Lincoln's early youth, the cabin life, the first

school days, trips down the Mississippi, the humors of the grocery store period; full attention to Ann Rutledge, Mary Owens and Mary Todd; a most elaborate collection of Lincoln's stories and the stories about Lincoln; and a very extensive study of Lincoln's law practice, bringing to our attention scores of the cases and the litigants whom he dealt with in Springfield or on circuit or in Chicago. It is a book, in the first place, full of people —though not to confusion.

But Mr. Sandburg has not taken his life work lightly, nor confined himself to the pictorial and narrative aspects of the biographical art. He has desired, I surmise, to make a book to "live in," and with that in mind he has gone back to 1809 and lived his way down to 1861, as concretely as possible, yet as responsively as possible with reference to all the economic, social, ethical, religious and political forces in all parts of the country which were driving toward the irrepressible conflict. Macaulay would have reveled in Mr. Sandburg's details.

Here are lists of the clothing for sale in a Springfield general store, bills of fare from western hotels, names of the principal varieties of whisky and other liquors available to guests, analysis of the fees received in a law office in the course of a year, analysis of advertising in a Springfield newspaper, enumeration of the oxcarts and wagons moving toward the western border, market prices of slaves, value of the cotton crop, value of the negro population, value of New England manufactories, account of the way the millionaires of New York made their fortunes, analysis of Biblical, legal and constitutional arguments on the sacredness of property,

composition and circulation of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," death of John Quincy Adams, reading of "Leaves of Grass" by Lincoln, the contents of Herndon's scientific library, Emerson's visit to Springfield. There are some big standing pools in this biography. There are times when one feels the drag of the years pretty heavily, but on the whole it is astonishing how well the streaming processional effect of crowded time is maintained.

The idea underlying this comprehensive study of Lincoln in "the prairie years" is, as it appears to me, rationalistic and liberal. To Mr. Sandburg, Lincoln is a hero, but he is a hero with a rational explanation. He was intelligibly and inevitably "produced" by his own times and circumstances and people. He was the resultant of their benigner impulses, happily disengaged from their baser ones. Lincoln was the man that "our people" are rather blindly and unconsciously striving to become. He is a hero, but a true folk hero; and the Great Mother who brought him forth is lovable, too.

Here, at any rate, is an opportunity to become better acquainted with Carl Sandburg as well as with Abraham Lincoln. They are good companions, the two of them, and mutually illuminating—Illinoisians both, plain people, admirable story-tellers, rationalists, Jeffersonian democrats both, both non-professing Christians—Lincoln perhaps the completest specimen that has appeared in the Western hemisphere, and both poets withal, made melancholy at times and gentle-hearted by asking themselves what folk remember . . . "in the dust, in the cool tombs."

I am glad Carl Sandburg wrote this book. I like

Lincoln the better for it and Carl Sandburg and myself and my neighbor. And that result, when all the ado about free territory and squatter sovereignty is forgotten smoke, that result is the living virtue that streams out of Lincoln forever.

THOMAS JEFFERSON: AN ENGLISH INTERPRETATION

At close range Thomas Jefferson was among the most charming of American statesmen. Like George Washington, he was a country gentleman of Virginia with ten thousand acres and a couple of hundred slaves, a taste for light wines and a fondness for riding thoroughbred horses, which he liked to have so well groomed that he could pass a cambric handkerchief over their shining necks without catching a particle of dust.

Unlike Washington, he was a liberally educated man of extensive modern and classical culture. The Greek and Latin historians and philosophers he read all his life with delight. He knew four or five modern languages, including Anglo-Saxon, which he learned in order to get at the sources of English law. He studied law philosophically and thoroughly in the school which produced John Marshall. He was a mathematician, a botanist, a bird lover of John Burroughs's school in advance of its founding; he loved music and played the violin; he had a taste for painting; he read Montaigne and good eighteenth-century fiction—Fielding, Sterne, Smollett, Gil Blas; he understood Palladian architecture and some of his work has been pronounced flawless by the most competent judges. He was certainly the first and very likely he was the last American President who ever wrote with rapture to his daughter of listening to

the nightingales and thinking of Petrarch's Laura by the fountain of Vaucluse. Lord Bryce, wishing to compliment Theodore Roosevelt at the close of his second term and forgetting how he "despised" the sage of Monticello, wrote that Jefferson was the predecessor whom Roosevelt most resembled in "range and variety of interests."

When Jefferson and John Adams were old men they agreed that civilization had gone forward since the time of the Borgias and that the eighteenth century was the great period of the modern world. Jefferson, like Franklin, was a true child of the Age of Enlightenment. He had thoroughly modernized his mind philosophically, religiously, politically. He was familiar with the English and European writers who discoursed of natural rights and sought to found institutions upon "the law of nature." The original sources of his political philosophy were in Milton, Harrington, Algernon Sidney, Littleton and Coke. He knew his Locke, his Shaftesbury and his Bolingbroke. When he was practicing at the Virginia bar all the young lawyers, he declared, were Whigs, and he himself was an English Whig from his youth.

Down in Virginia, where there was never any antithesis between gentleman and democrat, they still speak of "Mr. Jefferson" as if he were living—their tall, auburn-haired, hazel-eyed neighbor, with the old Southern open house, the courteous manners, the neighborly spirit, the tireless devotion to the public welfare. I myself have seen a grandfatherly Senator from a state further south than Virginia adjust his spectacles, open a volume of the works of Jefferson, select and read a passage, then

pushing his spectacles high on his forehead, expound the page as reverently as if he were discoursing on a text from the Bible. That is the way a devout democrat takes his Jefferson.

And that is the way in which one of Jefferson's masterpieces, the Declaration of Independence, has now these hundred and fifty years been administered to American school children. It is true that school children do not fully understand their natal equality nor their inalienable right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness. There are mysteries for them in these sayings, as there are also in the Sermon on the Mount. But they are early indoctrinated with a religious sentiment regarding freedom and equality which, when they come to be big business men, may prove the fine dust in the balance, turning the scale for humanity against barbarism, leading them to relinquish a seat in the car to a decrepit person of another race and preventing them from shoving an overalled plumber into the gutter. "No American," says President Butler, "can compare with Jefferson in the measure of influence wielded over public opinion"; and it is perhaps in the quality of the feeling that one American has for the next American to him that this influence has been most potently exerted.

Simple and childlike souls, like Abraham Lincoln, whose immense fortitude depended on his faith in a few "axioms," cling to "the religion of democracy" all through the ardors of political life. Invited to speak in 1860 at a Jefferson dinner in Boston, Lincoln replied April 6 in a letter quoted by Mr. Sandburg in his recently published biography:

Soberly, it is now no child's play to save the principles of Jefferson from total overthrow in this nation. The principles of Jefferson are the definitions and axioms of free society. And yet they are denied and evaded, with no small show of success. One dashingly calls them "glittering generalities." Another bluntly calls them "self-evident lies." And others insidiously argue that they apply only to "superior races." These expressions, differing in form, are identical in object and effect—the supplanting of the principles of free government and restoring those of classification, caste and legitimacy. They would delight a convocation of crowned heads plotting against the people. . . . Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves; and, under a just God, cannot long retain it.

Along toward the end of the last century there was something like a concerted effort—for reasons intimately related to the political time-spirit—to prove that a brilliant financier from the West Indies with a Napoleonic military ambition was an infinitely wiser statesman and better American than the Whiggish gentlemen from Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts who had the main hand in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

In the renascence of Hamiltonian nationalism which preceded and followed the Spanish War, the writing of history and biography became an eminently political art. We were taken in hand by the strenuous Lodge-Roosevelt-Beveridge school of historians and biographers, and taught the childishness of the popular faith. This school felt the need of Lincoln. Overlooking the fact that Lincoln went to war, declaring that "the

principles of Jefferson are the definitions and axioms of free society," Roosevelt congratulated an English biographer on "finely" saying that Lincoln "carried out the Hamiltonian tradition."

For this school Jefferson was an empty logothete and the regular whipping-boy for all the sins of the Democratic party. "He was," said Roosevelt, "not even excepting Buchanan, the most incompetent Chief Executive we ever had, and whose well-nigh solitary service as President to his country, the acquisition of Louisiana, was rendered by adopting the Federalist principles which he had most fiercely denounced." "As for Bryan," said Roosevelt on another occasion, "though he has many kindly and amiable traits, what a shallow demagogue he is! I do not believe he is a bit worse than Thomas Jefferson, and I do not think that if elected President he will be a worse President. The country would survive, but it would suffer, just as the country suffered for at least two generations because of its folly in following Jefferson's lead."

The last passage which I have quoted is from a letter of August 6, 1906, addressed to Lodge. On the same day Roosevelt wrote to Mr. Frederick Scott Oliver, the English author of a new Life of Alexander Hamilton:

Thank heaven, I have never hesitated to criticize Jefferson; he was infinitely below Hamilton! I think the worship of Jefferson a discredit to my country; and I have as small use for the ordinary Jeffersonian as for the ordinary defender of the house of Stuart—and I am delighted to notice that you share this prejudice with

me. I think Jefferson, *on the whole,* did harm in public life.

There was a streak of Jeffersonian Democracy in Roosevelt himself which sometimes left him cold to the moneyed class and was destined to split the neo-Hamiltonian League; but during the World War, as every one remembers, he returned to the fold. Jefferson became the whipping-boy for the sins of the Administration. "The Federalist principles" were forced upon a President who had set out to preach the New Freedom. The "implied powers" of the Federal government were enormously extended. And every man who wished to regulate his neighbor's labor, his education, his purse, or his dinner table came forward with a new amendment to the Constitution. Federalism was becoming thoroughly "efficient," just as in the ancient days of the Alien and Sedition acts; and, following in its lead, we began to persecute the Jews and the Catholics and the Negroes, to legislate the Book of Genesis into the public schools, to abolish "freedom of conscience," "freedom of speech," and "freedom of research," and we sent out the navy to enforce "the will of the people" upon the people. In this direction there is little left to try but the army and a dictator.

That reaction against the new Reign of Terror has set in is obvious. At every corner one can hear some fellow-citizen muttering under his breath "glittering generalities," "self-evident lies," about his inalienable right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness. In high places is preached the stern duty of "civic disobedience" to usurped authority, abridging the individual right to self-control.

Organizations of eminent citizens and fine gentlemen applaud one another for their manly defiance of the electorate. Plenty of good people are in a mood to applaud a revival of the Kentucky and Virginia resolutions. For, as in 1860, there is "a nigger in the woodpile" in the shape of the Eighteenth Amendment; and there is even talk of a secession movement of cities to escape from the tyranny of the country districts. The stage is swept and garnished for any man who will cogently re-expound "the definitions and axioms of free society." The time is ripe for a revaluation of Jefferson—for our virtues, as Shakespeare observed, lie in the interpretation of the time.

For a decade indications have been multiplying that Jefferson's case would be re-opened in time for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of his death, which falls on the next Independence Day. In 1916 Mr. Fiske Kimball published an elaborate study, "Jefferson, Architect," showing the Virginian's pioneer service in the eighteenth century classical revival. In 1918 Professor David Muzzey put forth a scholarly "Life of Thomas Jefferson," which Mr. Hirst characterizes as a "marked exception" to the dyspeptic and vengeful note of the later commentators. In 1923 President Butler, himself a Hamiltonian *quantum mutatus*, admitted Jefferson into his English lectures on "Building the American Nation," with the highly significant comment that "the teachings of Thomas Jefferson were less necessary during his lifetime than they are now." In 1924 Mr. Paul Wilstach gave us an intimate domestic picture in "Jefferson and Monticello," and in 1925 he edited the charming corre-

spondence sustained in the last fourteen years of their reconciled lives by John Adams and Jefferson.

In 1925 also appeared the "Jefferson and Hamilton" of Mr. Claude Bowers—a book which sets a new standard in American historical biography, not merely by the animation of its social picture and the vividness and brilliance of its characterization, but also by the almost superhuman wisdom which enabled Mr. Bowers to understand that one can better exhibit the strength of a giant by pitting him against a giant than by pitting him against a feeble nincompoop.

In 1926, in addition to Mr. Hirst's book,* we are soon to have a critical study by Albert J. Nock.

"For some reason not easy to understand," says Mr. Hirst, "no Englishman has ever written a biography of Jefferson"—the explanation probably being that ever since "American Notes" the average Englishman has regarded Jeffersonian democracy as even nastier than it looks. Mr. Hirst is, however, an Englishman who grew curious about Jefferson at the time of the second Hague Conference, when he discovered Jefferson's part with Franklin in working for "the freedom of the seas." He served his apprenticeship in the biographical art under Lord Morley, assisting him in sifting the archives at Hawarden Castle in preparation for the monumental "Life of Gladstone." He has been editor of "The Economist" since 1907 and his scholarly preoccupations are indicated by his authorship of "Essays in Liberalism," "Local Government in England," "The Manches-

* *Life and Letters of Thomas Jefferson* by Francis W. Hirst. New York, 1926.

ter School" and "Adam Smith" in the English Men of Letters Series.

Mr. Hirst has had to fight his way to Jefferson through clouds of English and American false witnesses, chief among them the author of the "English Life of Hamilton," to which I have already referred, Mr. F. S. Oliver, who, like our own neo-Hamiltonians, exerted all his biographical powers to prove that Jefferson was, on the whole, an incomprehensible nincompoop. Mr. Hirst, thrown on the defensive, has some of a champion's ardor. He vigorously and effectively deals with nearly all the chief charges directed by Jefferson's enemies against his wisdom, his executive competency, his personal character and his honor. In this treatment Jefferson stands before us no longer as a shady demagogic riddle, but as an august American Father of remarkable coherence and substantiality, notable as Lincoln was notable, as Gladstone was notable, for his passionate desire to make the state behave like a reasonable and humane man.

Mr. Hirst has emerged from his researches with a conviction that a right understanding of Jefferson is absolutely essential to a comprehension of public life in the United States. "To match Jefferson," he declares—having special reference to his influence upon the national ethos—"you would have to roll Bentham, Cobden and Gladstone into one." Jefferson was a juridical philosopher who had an opportunity far surpassing Bentham's, to write his sense of political justice into the fundamental laws of his state and nation. In his distrust of foreign entanglements, in his suspicion of large armies and navies, in his support of the Monroe Doctrine, in his Louisiana Purchase and his Western policy,

in his free trade doctrine and in his fundamental antipathy to aggressive wars he labored to mold a coherent national policy which would enable his country to live among other similar countries as amicably as one citizen of the Republic lives with another.

In writing his able and comprehensive life Mr. Hirst has performed for Anglo-American understanding a service similar to that performed in the war time by Lord Charnwood's timely and admirable "Abraham Lincoln," but, I think, even more fundamental and more difficult.

It was more difficult because Jefferson's was a far more complex, more highly organized, more highly cultivated, and more originative mind than Lincoln's. Relatively speaking, Lincoln's was a derivative figure, and the traits for which he is idolized are essentially Jeffersonian. Certainly we have as good a right to speak of the tradition of Lincoln and Jefferson as of the tradition of Lincoln and Hamilton. Those who are tracing "the rights of man" follow the first line. Lincoln's abiding greatness is moral. His great virtue lay in the steadfast application of democratic charity, fortitude and patience to two very definite tasks, the perpetuation of the Union and the restriction and abolition of slavery, whereas Jefferson was occupied with creating, elaborating and harmonizing the entire intellectual basis for a democratic society.

From the deep Jeffersonian river, Mr. Hirst clearly had it in mind to divert water to his English Liberal mill, and he has written of Jefferson's reduction of internal revenue, his slashing economies in the civil service and his famous "simplicity" with a yearning eye on post-

bellum problems in England. Doubtless in this country as well the Jefferson League, incorporated in Washington on January 26, will make as much party grist as possible out of the recent biographies. But it will be a pity if American readers allow the "revival" to degenerate into a mere "factional" ovation, or into an occasion for "resurrecting" and reaffirming the gross caricatures and the malicious slanders with which party rancor beclouds and disfigures the forms of heroes. A hundred years after his death it is high time to begin an effort to see Jefferson as he really is, not as a vindictive demagogue and politician but as, on the whole, an extraordinarily serene and magnanimous constructive statesman, who for fifty years worked steadily for all things which, in his judgment, would contribute toward making the Republic a going concern.

THOMAS JEFFERSON: A REVALUATION

THE biographers have done their part to insure the centenary of Jefferson's death against a commemoration perfunctory and profitless. Each of the outstanding studies is so individual in treatment and point of view that no one of them can be substituted for another.

Mr. Bowers's "Jefferson and Hamilton" brilliantly exhibited the two great antagonists in collision and pictured with extraordinary animation the political and social scene in which, as he conceives the matter, "democracy" was born. The book made a sensation among politicians by representing both Jefferson and Hamilton as able men, and among the laity by making political history readable. Mr. Hirst's "Life and Letters of Thomas Jefferson" had the piquant novelty of being the first full length biography of the statesman by an Englishman—a novelty rendered the more striking by a treatment ardently sympathetic and defensive.

With these two spirited predecessors in the field, I felt a little nervous about Mr. Nock's place on the program.* There was no occasion for anxiety. Mr. Nock is jauntily at ease and quite unembarrassed by having to speak last. He arrives on the scene cool and aloof, quoting Greek and Latin, exhaling the aroma of belles-lettres and snapping his fingers at political democracy as indifferently as St. Paul snapped his at the great question of cir-

* Jefferson by Albert J. Nock. New York, 1926.

cumcision versus uncircumcision. In his bibliographical note he courteously pays his respects to Mr. Muzzey, to Mr. Bowers, to Mr. Hirst, and even to Mr. Beveridge as author of "the worst that a good attorney can make of Mr. Jefferson." He adds a word for the old biography of James Parton as still commendable for the general reader. And then, with hardly a controversial word, he produces a portrait of remarkable freshness on lines of his own.

I suppose Mr. Nock himself, if asked to name the distinguishing feature of his treatment, would lay less stress upon his original researches than upon the general illumination of his point of view, which enables him to see multitudes of fine points in his subject which political portraitists have neither valued nor observed. Indeed, in his acknowledgments to Mr. Charles A. Beard for his work on the economic origins of Jefferson's democracy he intimates that by taking his stand with Mr. Beard he has attained a view of political history in the Jeffersonian period which American intelligence, proceeding at its present pace, will hardly attain in less than four or five centuries.

Projecting himself into the remote enlightened future, Mr. Nock looks back on governments and governors with profound philosophical disdain. He reads political interpretations of modern history with a smile of amused superiority. The time-honored notion that in Jefferson and Hamilton two incompatible political theories met in an epoch-making clash he regards as an illusion belonging to the era of economic ignorance which God winked at. Federalism and anti-Federalism, republicanism and democracy, aristocracy and Jacobinism, monarchism

and mobocracy—these were slogans flaunted on party banners, missiles hurled in party warfare, playthings of orators and demagogues. But these terms defined no real issues.

The real division developing in the young nation, according to Mr. Nock, was between the producing and the exploiting classes. Economic analysis had not gone far enough in the eighteenth century to make the actualities in the situation as plain even to the most sagacious leader then as they are to even the economic babes of to-day. And so Jefferson spoke with real fury and sincerity and apprehension of Hamilton's "monarchism and Anglomania." And Hamilton spoke with real fury and sincerity and apprehension of Jefferson's "womanish attachment to France and womanish resentment of Great Britain." But neither of the men was actually set in motion by sentimental or doctrinaire considerations. Whatever conscious motives may have been present to Hamilton's mind, his entire practical statesmanship was directed to consolidating the interests of bankers, merchants, speculators, office-holders and clergy; or, as Mr. Nock urgently and cynically puts it, to releasing "the cohesive power of public plunder." Jefferson clashed with him because he represented another economic group —the farmer-labor group.

I suspect Mr. Nock's economic analysis of politics as I suspect the Freudian analysis of the family—not as unsound so far as it goes, but as inadequate, as touched with mono-mania, and too exclusively enamored of its own "bugaboo." But Mr. Nock holds that this is the key to the inconsistencies and contradictions in Jefferson's theory and practice which his enemies have long

imputed to him for unrighteousness—measuring his conduct by the straight rod of political theory. Judged as an unconscious economist rather than as a political theorist, he was generally consistent and loyal to his chosen group of interests, though he did not always serve it wisely.

The current notion that he was windy and visionary is a myth begotten of the political diatribes which pass for history and biography. He thought of the nation's business in an eminently concrete and practical fashion. He insisted, for example, that the books of the Secretary of the Treasury might be and ought to be as comprehensible to a plain farmer as the accounts of the overseer of a plantation.

In so far as the discussion of Jefferson's part in public affairs fortifies the "economic interpretation of history" Mr. Nock treats it briefly, pungently, often with penetrating illumination, and always with the disdain of a speculative "high priest of the kid glove persuasion" for "the political distribution of wealth" as established by the Constitution, the courts, and the fiscal system of the Fathers. But, looking forward to the millennium when we shall all be philosophic anarchists, governed by economists rather than by politicians and by customs rather than by laws, he deliberately ignores or dismisses with a word many passages in Jefferson's career which an orthodox political biographer would present as of the first importance.

When American intelligence, some five hundred years hence, becomes mature, all this which now appears paradoxical, thinks our essayist, will appear platitudinous. We shall interest ourselves then in what primarily inter-

ests Mr. Nock now: Jefferson as a philosopher and man of culture—rich in experience, rich in curiosity, of an intellectual and moral symmetry and a social vision far beyond the apprehension of the age in which he flourished. That, as it seems to me, is Mr. Nock's true thesis; and the originality of his book results from his altogether charming and convincing development of it. His contempt of politics and all its sound and fury leaves his mind cool, free and attentive to receive a full impression of that fine complex humanity which a nation of diligent Philistines has been too busy and too ignorant to appraise.

His Jefferson is a character with a strong spiritual likeness to Marcus Aurelius as depicted by Matthew Arnold, with whose writings, by the way, Mr. Nock is thoroughly saturated. Like the stoic emperor, Jefferson had faint appetite for public responsibility, and he never courted public applause by speaking to the people or exhibiting himself to them. He bore the burden of state when it was thrust upon him, because it was the duty of a "social being." He bore it to the brink of personal bankruptcy without wincing. He preferred the second place to the first, and sincerely praised the Vice-Presidential office for affording "philosophical evenings in the winter and rural days in the summer." In his first Presidential term he deliberately set about destroying instead of building up his political fences. "Never," says Mr. Nock, "since the time of the Antonines, if then, was seen anything comparable to the disinterestedness of this Administration."

Far from being an infatuated democrat, he was disillusioned about politics. Again like the emperor, he

mildly recognized for his private consideration that the generality of men are fools in matters beyond their private capacities—self-interested and short-sighted. Yet he held steadfastly to his contention "that the mass of mankind was not born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God." His equalitarianism was the flower of his Virginian gentility. He hated all forms of tyranny because he was a gentleman. He hated greed because he was a gentleman. He was so sensitive a gentleman that it humiliated him to be assigned by law a larger portion of his father's estate than his brother. Himself an elder brother, in revising the laws of Virginia he struck at legalized special privilege in the laws of primogeniture and entail. And he labored at the foundation of American "equality" in measures for religious liberty and popular education.

Since he was not born into the great class of Have-nots but, like Washington, was a planter of ten or eleven thousand acres, a little reflection is required to understand why George instinctively sided with Mr. Nock's "exploiters" and Thomas with the producers. Recent Washington studies show him on his native heath an acquisitive and somewhat speculative squire. The decisive difference between the two men was a difference in culture. Jefferson at Monticello had small talent for acquisition: he was a philosopher with a strain of that asceticism or, more accurately speaking, fastidiousness proper to a genuine intellectual. He raised tobacco but never used it; ate little animal food; in a hard drinking society drank "the weak wines only"; among heavy gamblers, never had a card in his house; kept fine horses

but shunned the race-track; danced and flirted but never lost his head to women, and was a devoted husband and father; had many house servants but always built his own fire; loved leisure and worked fifteen hours a day, for fifty years never missing the sunrise.

Among the great Americans of his period he was perhaps most like Franklin in the range of his interests. By necessity he was familiar with the wide circle of the arts and crafts practiced on an almost self-sufficient plantation. He turned his hand to various more or less useful inventions, including the leather buggy top and the swivel chair; and when he was abroad he kept a sharp lookout for every sort of mechanical appliance which might usefully be sent to his countrymen. He practiced law but detested lawyers as exploiters. "Nature intended me," he said, "for the tranquil pursuit of sciences by rendering them my supreme delight." He conducted experiments in agriculture, attempted naturalizing upland rice and olives, had enlightened views of the relation of forests to rainfall, early recognized the importance of chemistry, criticized and modified Buffon's views of natural history, theorized on the Asiatic origin of the Indians and made elaborate collections of their language. When he undertook in his old age to be a father to the University of Virginia he had the elements of a liberal modern university in his head and fifty years of reflection on education.

But possibly the aspect of Jefferson's many-sided culture which strikes us as most distinctive and which is most calculated to win him new friends in these pleasure-seeking days is the place which he made in the "good life" for delight. He loved music, played the violin as-

siduously, till his wrist was broken, apparently made part of his impression upon his future wife by the gift of a pianoforte, and tried to organize a band among his employees. More significant than that, according to Mr. Nock, he considered the subject with relation to the national culture and lamented that American music was "in a state of deplorable barbarism." Viewing with a practical and realistic eye the possibilities of enriching our society, he decided that the economic basis needful to support the art of painting was insufficient. But for architecture, in which he himself was practically proficient, there was immediate place, in which he erected some of the finest monuments of eighteenth-century classical taste. In the field of poetry he was modernist enough to entertain a high enthusiasm for Ossian and he was classicist enough in his beautiful and philosophic old age to quote eight lines of Theocritus in Greek in a letter to old John Adams. This dangerous free-thinker —eighteenth-century Bolshevik—occupied himself also during his Indian summer in making a collection of the words of Jesus from the New Testament.

As for the common slanderous charge that Jefferson lacked style and, in his personal attire at the White House, exemplified democratic slovenliness, Mr. Nock resents that with spirit. He disperses that myth like the parallel cherry tree story—as was of course necessary before Jefferson could be commended to a younger generation which feels sure of little but the importance of clothes. If Thomas Jefferson, as is alleged, appeared before the English Ambassador in dressing gown and slippers, we are to understand that the outraged Briton

had routed him out at an improper hour. It is a little point which, however, Mr. Nock thinks it worth while to make, because he is portraying not a successful exploiter of his fellow creatures, but a man who knew how to live, a man with an instinct for the realities of civilization.

THOREAU RETURNS FROM ABROAD

M. Bazalgette's life of Thoreau in the French edition, which appeared in the Paris bookshops last summer, pleased and surprised at least one pair of American eyes as a tuft of arbutus exhibited in the same place would have surprised and pleased them. In their selection of American authors for transplanting, the French have had an eye on those qualities of wildness which Mr. D. H. Lawrence recently discovered in our classics, qualities which we ourselves have till recently tended to undervalue or ignore. Cooper they seized upon early; he supplemented Chateaubriand and the seekers of strange climes and dark skins between him and Pierre Loti. Poe they appropriated as another fascinating exotic; he supplemented Baudelaire and the seekers of abnormal visions and deliriums between him and Mallarmé. In the recent popularity of Jack London and James Oliver Curwood one finds not so much an interest in America as a desire to feed in some fashion that craving for romantic adventure to which Cooper ministered. M. Bazalgette relishes the wildness in Thoreau; yet there is a certain difference.

During the late war French and American cultural propagandists overhauled their stock of literature and considered with new seriousness its fitness for exportation to the countries of their allies. Similarly they overhauled the stocks of their allies, considering from a

fresh point of view what was most suitable for importation at that hour. The immediate occasion for the inventory is over. But we may perhaps associate with the wartime earnestness of desire to know one another's more serious minds the interest manifested here in writers like Barrès, Gide and Proust; and on the other hand, the French attempt to get at Emerson, Whitman and Thoreau. A French author who occupies a post in the ministry of Foreign Affairs, M. Jean Giraudoux, recently testified to his sense that a change has come over the position of French literature in the world. Intellectuals abroad, especially in the younger countries, no longer look to Paris for diversion, but for counsel and guidance. "To-day," he says, "French literature is preeminently valued for its moral and poetic qualities." Young French writers cultivate their own fine line of "moralists."

A favorable season for exchanging commodities with those moralistic Yankees, so long engrossed in the problem of how to live! M. Régis Michaud translates Emerson's Journals and discourses on Anglo-Saxon mystics and realists. In 1920 M. Bazalgette's enthusiastic life of Whitman makes as much of a stir here as it made years before in France. We like our things better after they have crossed the sea. Two years ago M. Louis Fabulet, translator of "Leaves of Grass," introduced Thoreau to French readers as a sylvan St. Francis in "Walden ou la vie dans les bois," with a prefatory avowal that he had turned to the Concord man as a guide who might help the bewildered modern world out of its confusion. And now M. Bazalgette produces a life of Thoreau on about the same scale as his "Whit-

man"; and it is promptly brought back to us in a racily American translation by Mr. Van Wyck Brooks.

The publishers tell us that this book "will undoubtedly be accepted as the classic biography of the poet-naturalist of Concord." Let us leave that to posterity. What the book aims to do is to popularize with the novel-reading public a dead man who in his lifetime showed small talent for popularity. M. Bazalgette's method has some very great merits and some crying defects. I suppose he may have studied the work of his more important predecessors: the biographies of Channing, Page, Sanborn, Salt and Mrs. Marble; the biographical and critical studies by Emerson, Lowell, Stevenson, Mr. P. E. More and Mr. Mark Van Doren; but as he employs no index, bibliography or footnotes, it is not easy to trace him to these sources. His direct references to Thoreau's own works are few and his direct citations from them are infrequent. It is clear, however, that he knows them very well indeed. He has devoured and digested them, journals and all, the twenty volumes, of which much the greater part was published posthumously. Having thus taken possession of his author, he proceeds in the historical present to talk about him and to him, from the cradle to the grave—as if poor Thoreau were in the next room, or, in the passages of apostrophe, actually facing his biographer, who won't let him get in a word edgewise.

So far as I have been able to check it, M. Bazalgette's account of what "Henry" said and did is adequately comprehensive and very trustworthy indeed. He has paged him most assiduously about the Concord woods and ponds, along the Concord and Merrimack rivers,

up in Maine and Canada, down to Cape Cod, in his tutorial residence on Staten Island, up Monadnoc and Greylock, and out to Minnesota. He is always vivid and lively; in the earlier part of the book he is fatiguingly lively. His sustained dithyrambic harangue gives a kind of dancing animation and the effect of sociability, and even of garrulity, to a laconic tight-lipped man who seldom danced and who was addicted to solitude and to silence. M. Bazalgette does not know how to describe quiet quietly. He feels constrained to jazz up the stillness of a mountain top. Under his management the pace of life at Walden Pond becomes hectic. The method justifies itself only when something momentous is going on; an interview with John Brown, a passenger helped at daybreak along the "Underground Railway," a trip to New York when Thoreau and Alcott visit Horace Greeley, hear a sermon by Henry Ward Beecher and the next morning call on Walt Whitman.

No previous writer, I believe, has so deeply felt the import of that meeting between Thoreau and Whitman, and no previous writer has so intensely imagined the scene. Here is a bit of it, which shows M. Bazalgette at his best in the realistic evocation of spirits:

Henry, with his habit of absorbing phenomena, sits there, all eyes—with those eyes that know how to look—seeking to understand, to pierce to the bottom. Henry, the dry little animal, all nerves and tendons, with his drooping shoulders and his narrow chest (look at that great thorax over there, ready for any fist to strike it . . .); Henry, with his receding chin, lost in the little apish beard which he is allowing to grow just now, his

pursed lips, his big, contemptuous nose, his absorbed, reflective, alert air, his whole life gazing with implacable seriousness out of the blue-gray windows of those eyes that are so round, sagacious, keen, vigilant, shining with perpetual use like a spade; Henry, whose lean body refuses to speak for his soul, with his frail health and his tempered will, crouching behind his own glance like a hunter on his knees in some thicket, face to face with this demigod beaming with nonchalance and carnal opulence; Henry, saturated with the woodland life of his village, beside this other whose soul is peopled with his own Broadway. . . . And each is trying to catch the scent of the other.

The two men confronting each other there, the Concord man silently divining the greatness of the Manhattanese, *thought* alike, as M. Bazalgette shows, on a great many points. Set down their leading ideas about nature, books, experience, religion, poetry, and you find that they curiously "tally"; you can scarcely tell from which brain they came forth. And the main current of modern American literature flows away from a spring at their feet. Both of them are disciples of Emerson, who perhaps liberated a greater variety of ideas than both of them together. And both of them have gone beyond their serene master in living the new gospel which they all preach: the doctrine of continuous revelation, self-trust, self-dependence, the divineness of the present hour, the divineness of the soul and the divineness of the body.

All M. Bazalgette's adverse criticism of Thoreau follows hard upon his account of this meeting with Whitman; and, indeed, his criticism is already implicit in his

description of the meeting. Thoreau lacks something which Whitman possesses in abundance; he lacks the power to give himself in friendship and in love. Actually this man is no true hermit. In secret and in solitude he hungers and thirsts for intimate communion with friends and lovers. But ice locks his heart, seals his lips. The sympathy which aches within him dies within him unexpressed. His private journals confess his torment, his failure, in human relations. What ails the man that he departs from society with fists clenched, frustrated, bitter, sarcastic? Is it deficiency of animal spirits? Is it the curb bit of asceticism too long, too tightly subjecting the patient body to the proud mind?

Don't you realize, exclaims M. Bazalgette, subtle as you are, fool that you have suddenly become, the importance of a little familiar gesture that will set you both free? Come, you who are so brave, so resolute in attack, you who profess to be liberating men who are prisoners of their own sordid existence, confess that you lack the courage. . . . You should live your friendship a little; you should put into practice the principles of that exalted affection which you say cannot be satisfied among men, live it instead of singing its praises, you infernal New England prude!

In this passage M. Bazalgette is developing a point in the destructive line of approach laid out by Lowell and Stevenson and completed in the trenchant study of Mr. Mark Van Doren. Lowell made out Thoreau to be an eccentric, conceited, sentimental, vain, selfish, humorous and rather tedious prig, but his treatment of his Concord neighbor is such a complete essay in misunder-

standing as one should have expected from a vain and conceited egotist who happened to be greedy for pudding and praise and power and creature comforts and office and after-dinner speaking and all the rewards of Cambridge orthodoxy and respectability which Thoreau despised. But Stevenson, who was a critic of altogether different kidney—Stevenson also says that Thoreau was "dry, priggish and selfish." Yes, but Stevenson's essay in "Familiar Studies" is, on the whole, the most intelligent and appreciative study of Thoreau's qualities ever written in that space, and in his preface he recants, declaring his adverse comment valid for the man's theory, but not for the man; and, to add weight to his retraction, he says: "Upon me this pure, narrow, sunnily ascetic Thoreau had exercised a great charm. I have scarce written ten sentences since I was introduced to him but his influence might be somewhere detected by a close observer." But finally there is Mr. Mark Van Doren, the young radical intelligence and poetic temperament of our time most likely, I should suppose, to savor to the full the wild apple tang of Thoreau, and Mr. Van Doren, in a formidably impressive critical study of 1916, presents the indefinite expansion of an egotism in a vacuum, a man chiefly memorable as creator of "the classic image of the cynic hermit in an ideal solitude."

What perversity is in us that as soon as even our best friends are in question we begin, as Thoreau himself observed, to talk scandal, as if to avert the jealousy of evil gods! Thoreau's failure in friendship was only relative. He had an absolute and perfect friendship in the eye of his soul, and when he spoke of his actual ex-

perience in the relation he exaggerated his failure in the fine rapture of his art; his words were tinged with the spleen of the idealist. As a matter of fact, he won devoted friends who felt toward him as the Franciscan brothers felt toward St. Francis, and they shyly sent him the tributes of lovers—a superb collection of Oriental books from England, mayflowers, pear trees, humming-birds' nests. But, says a scandalous friend, "I would as soon have thought of taking his arm as taking the limb of an elm tree." Stevenson and Mr. Van Doren, who clearly are lovers of his, mock at the coldness of the man. And I myself had almost forgotten to say that I have loved Thoreau longer and more steadily than I have loved any other American writer whatsoever. The carpers are right; he said icy things about friendship: "One goes forth prepared to say 'Sweet friends' and the salutation is 'Damn your eyes!' " But who has said anything more beautiful of friends?—"They are kind to each other's dreams."

I had almost forgotten to say that here on my desk is a little sheaf of my own notes from Thoreau's "Spring," dated April, 1900, full of the friendliest things that he said to me a quarter of a century ago, binding me to him by a wisdom born of his resolute devotion to the real world in which we live now:

I wish so to live ever as to derive my satisfaction and inspiration from the commonest events, everyday phenomena, so that what my senses hourly perceive in my daily walk, the conversations of my neighbors, may inspire me and I may dream of no heaven but that which lies about me.

M. Bazalgette, emphasizing the evidence in the journals of unsuccessful love and friendships—the point recognized by Stevenson as an afterthought—prepares the way for a new and humorless study of Thoreau by Mr. Van Wyck Brooks, perhaps, a study of Thoreau as a pure tragedy of the suppressed life. Mr. Van Wyck Brooks is a clever and remorseless pursuer of a thesis, and I have no doubt that he could make out a plausible "case."

But I surmise, in the face of all adverse criticisms, past or still to come, that it is going to be impossible to establish Thoreau finally among the failures. As M. Bazalgette says very justly, "One cannot have everything, and as he reckoned it all up he did not repent his choice." His relative failure in love and friendship he was stoical about, as a thing to be endured; but it was pretty nearly the only thing in his life which called for stoical endurance. All the rest of his life tasted good to him from rind to core. He was an ascetic of the Epicurean sect. He dieted his senses only in order to make them more acute. He boiled the water out of his life for the sake of the sugar at the bottom of the pan, and he got the sugar!

Love and friendship in perfection are fine things, to be sure. But what utter nonsense, what unimpressive hypocrisy, to pretend that perfect love and friendship are within the easy grasp of any Babbitt who pays his taxes, attends church, keeps his store and lives respectably at home with his wife and children! What idleness to argue that Thoreau sacrificed his chance to participate in a common good by living for a couple of years at Walden Pond! What absurdity to regret that

he didn't stick to the pencil business! Emotional warmth is a pleasant thing to feel. So is furnace heat or the glow of a roaring fireplace at Elmwood. But suppose you are Stanley and wish to know what there is at the heart of Africa. Suppose you are Shackleton or Peary and wish to know what is at the South Pole or at the North Pole. If you are really bent on getting there you will dispense with furnace heat and the consummation of love and you won't talk as if the sacrifice were tragic, either. If any one says that you turned Polar explorer because some schoolgirl married your brother instead of you, you will know what to think of him. With Mr. D. H. Lawrence, I believe it is superannuated cant to speak as if the consummations of love and friendship were the only ultimately satisfactory objects of man's business on earth.

I venture therefore to believe that American criticism has not yet adequately stated Thoreau's success. It has mistaken what he was about. He had no particular desire to glorify the "simple life." He did not wish to colonize the shores of Walden Pond with hermits. Thoreau was essentially a discoverer and an explorer. What he set out, above all, to explore was the capacity of the human will to accomplish whatever it was set to perform: whether to walk forty miles, eat a fried rat or a keg of nails, read Oriental philosophy, sleep under boards, or write the most sinewy prose in America. In his secession from church and state and Concord society there was little evidence of petulant whim; there was much evidence of rational purpose. He had to secede from the pressure which urged him to be a pencil maker, if he was to become a scholar, a

naturalist, a philosopher and a master of American prose. He had to secede, if he was to preserve the primitive and savage element in his nature, which he reverenced as well as the intellectual one. He had to secede, because he was ashamed to live under a government which conducted the Mexican War and sustained the institution of slavery. He had to secede in order to test his will, to ascertain how much resolution is required in order to put one's self in opposition to all the powers which regiment and uniform the human spirit.

Thoreau was successful. He did not invent a model life, but he did not attempt one. He exhibited a masterly will, inflexibly bent on minding its own business. He completely divested himself of the desire to bully his fellows; in return he demanded a similar forbearance from them. He resigned from all societies which he had not joined! He explored the powers of a minority of one, and he found them considerable. He was a little queer? Yes. He was the queer sort of man that civilization in the United States produces more infrequently perhaps than any other civilization in the world. He was an individual. In the circumstances just prior to the Civil War Thoreau thought that a higher service to mankind than philanthropy, and in the circumstances following the World War there are many reasons to believe that he was right.

BURROWING INTO BURROUGHS

Dr. Barrus had ample and excellent materials for a life of Burroughs.* She had put an enormous quantity of interesting and valuable stuff between her four covers. Her book is opulent but unshapely, garrulous, flabby and a little paralytic in the organs of locomotion. It leaves much to be desired in the way of accurately dating the abundant excerpts from the letters and journals. It is elaborately indexed, but contains only a perfunctory and incomplete list of Burroughs's own books—no adequate bibliography, no account of Burroughsiana, no adequate discussion of his forerunners, competitors and successors.

The attempted judicial summary according to Emersonian standards and the comparison with Thoreau are feeble and futile. Criticism is not one of the merits of this work. Its total effect is indecisive. It assures me of what I never doubted—that Burroughs was an inoffensive man of good habits, so far as major American morals are concerned; that is to say, when he was an old man he used neither liquor nor tobacco, and when accosted by a street-walker he exclaimed: "Oh, go home, you naughty girl, go home." It reminds me that not merely college girls, but also Mr. Edison, Henry Ford and Theodore Roosevelt approved of him and liked to

* *The Life and Letters of John Burroughs* by Clara Barrus. New York, 1925.

play with him. It presents a remarkable series of letters from one scientific student who was started in his career by him. But it leaves one in doubt about the value of his contributions to natural history and to letters.

This critical fogginess seems to be partly due to a shift in the biographer's interest during the course of the work. Dr. Barrus apparently set out with a zestful heroizing attitude toward her subject, considered as an eminent and delightful essayist on nature. The way she set her cap for him in 1901; bowled him over with compliments; went to Slabsides and captured him and his cottage; made herself indispensable to him; criticized and typed his manuscripts; bucked up his spirits for new enterprises; snatched him away from his wife and home when he was attacked by septuagenarian "cold feet," and, with a woman friend of hers, dragged him out to the Grand Canyon; there joined John Muir for a trip down the Bright Angel Trail and three or four days in the Yosemite; then dropped Muir and carried the reluctant J. B. out to the Hawaiian Islands; swam in the surf with him and carried him safely back and deposited him unharmed on the hard bosom of his family; and, finally, in 1914, took both John and his wife into her own household and kept them under biographical observation until their deaths, old John practically dying in her arms—that, I declare, is by all odds the most enterprising and exciting action recorded in these 800 pages.

The picture of these two grand and blameless old men of seventy, picked up by these buccaneering women and knocking around on camping expeditions through the West, sleeping on the ground with their hardy old bones rolled in blankets and their feet to the fire—that and the

whole biographical adventure of Dr. Barrus are unforgettable and exhilarating contributions to American life and letters.

I wish, as Burroughs himself unquestionably did, that Dr. Barrus had met him and carried him off twenty years earlier! He was harassed, discouraged and intimidated by his wife until he shrank from eager, robust humanity into a hermit thrush. If Dr. Barrus had caught him early and ravished him out of the thicket she might have made a man of him. She had the courage and the initiative which he lacked and which he could not find in the bosom of his family. But she seized him pretty late, when he was already sixty-four and too old for essential reconstruction.

And I venture the bold conjecture that her admiration for him suffered an eclipse on that Western trip when *her* John was always sighing for his dinner or for his bed, or, like a frightened child in a strange place, crying to go home; while big Scotch John Muir, veteran student of earth's sculpture in the High Sierras, showed himself insensible to hunger, fatigue or the need of sleep, radiated personality and humor, rallied "Johnnie" Burroughs incessantly on his "brazen ignorance" of geology and outshone him completely by his mental and physical energy, pluck, vivacity and his vistas of fresh adventure. The evidence for my conjecture that Dr. Barrus lost her romantic heart to Muir is that she ends by treating her own subject not as "genius" but as a "case"—the case of a very old man, physiologically and psychologically instructive, who did not get on well with his wife.

Burroughs himself was interested in his "case," recognized that there was a "problem" just beneath his solid-

looking surface, and on the whole his self-diagnosis shows remarkable insight. When a little girl in a hospital wept at seeing her "first great man," he said: "My dear, I am *not* a great man." He recognized an incompleteness, an insufficiency, in himself and in his work. He had lacked the nerve, the aggressiveness, the originality to satisfy his own ideal. He was tame when he should have been wild. He was smooth and decorous when he should have been rank and savory. He was superficial and explicit when he should have been abysmal and suggestive. He shrank back when he should have asserted himself. He lacked the absorbing egotism of genius. He admitted an "inferiority complex," and he and his biographer both worked on the explanation of it.

John Burroughs was born on a farm in Roxbury, N. Y., in 1837; but that need not have held him back, for Jay Gould was born on a farm in Roxbury in 1836, went through the country school with him, and yet was not held back. Dr. Barrus suggests an inadequacy in the adrenal glands, but that is too fundamental for me. John was the fifth of ten children descended from drivers of oxen. Both his parents were virtually illiterate, without manners, very poor and, as John remarked, unassertive people, who made no impression in the community. That is much more to the point. Burroughs loved the old home like an old cat and had strong family affections for his farmer folk—they were gentle, kindly and veracious; but all through his life the crudeness of his background and the extraordinary illiteracy of his own family were in his mind to be meditated on. Sometimes he thought them an advantage to him in keeping him humble, simple, docile to nature and content with his

vocation. But when he compared his antecedents, as he repeatedly did, with Emerson's seven or eight generations of antecedent culture and refinement, he had a humiliating sense of a handicap not to be overcome in one lifetime.

John pushed out of the beloved circle of his ignorant yokelry, largely by private reading in good eighteenth-century literature—Dr. Johnson, for example, Dr. Young, and such solid but slightly musty stuff, history and philosophy, as young Americans in the '50s found in seminary libraries. Then in the country schools he taught his way to an education. At twenty he married Ursula North, of prosperous family, a little older than he, strong willed, assertive and consciously superior to him.

He did not earn enough at teaching to support them both and he showed little enterprise about increasing his income. He early set his mind on becoming an author. She apparently thought that a silly self-indulgence, and even when he was well into the forties she advised him to give up writing and make some money. She was a fastidious housekeeper and he was a careless housemate. Within the first six years of their married life they seem to have quarreled often and violently. Often they separated and lived apart for long intervals. When they were living together in Washington John said the cat was careful to wipe her feet before venturing to step inside. John said that she cared nothing for him or for his work and never looked at him pleasantly except when he had a new suit of clothes. On one occasion when he was living by himself he wrote, with a great sigh of relief: "It seems an age since I have heard any one scold!" Out-

side the house she was timid, hated travel and strange places and held him back. She produced him one child, over whom he brooded with maternal fondness.

In 1864, at the age of twenty-seven, John sent her an extraordinarily interesting "ultimatum," in which he said among other things:

I cannot sacrifice myself, or what is the same, my tastes, my pursuits, my ideas, to anybody. . . . I want only sympathy, but if you cannot give me that, you can let me alone. . . . I often ask myself what there is in me that you love. I know there is so much that you do not love; I cannot see what there is left that you do love. . . . I see plainly what I do, and what I do not love in you; I do not love your pride, in the first place, nor your mathematical bump, nor your worldliness, nor your fear of other people's opinions, nor your self-approval, nor your uncharitableness, nor your scolding tendency, nor your disposition to lead and rule your husband. . . . I grant you the utmost freedom to choose and act for yourself. . . . I only ask the same for myself. . . .

This pair, on the conjugal rocks in their twenties, managed to bear the conjugal yoke together for sixty years! They must have had some affection and some usefulness to each other. For in 1913, after Ursula has had a critical illness John rejoices to think she is recovering, because she has begun again to look at him "in her critical way!" I regret that Dr. Barrus gives us, with adequacy, only John's side of this case. Unquestionably he believed that he had been henpecked, cowed and subdued all his life by his housemate. I believe that is the primary explanation of his "inferiority" complex.

An unworldly man of letters like John Burroughs undoubtedly should have at least two wives, if any; one a good housekeeper, like Ursula; the second, a wife to sympathize with him, soothe, flatter and stimulate him. A woman of first-rate capacity in both jobs is almost inconceivable. J. B.'s susceptibility to the Vassar girls who swarmed over him from Poughkeepsie is an indubitable token of his starved emotional nature. I do not believe that he turned to birds and flowers because his wife turned him from her. His love for birds was prior, sincere and enduring. But the narrowness of his addiction to them I think was due to her incapacity for opening to him any wide gateway of life.

In the end Burroughs pleased most the sort of people that he began by despising—cultivated, timorous people with starved emotional natures like his own. He discovered that he had a secret for giving thousands of admirers a harmless and, indeed, healthful pleasure. He had, like most men and all women, a weakness for adulation; and when he visited the Yellowstone Park with Roosevelt he thought that his wife, who had never been impressed by his books, would have been impressed by the attention that he received from Governors of states. He discovered in his later years that he had been successful and happy in exactly the fashion which the mass of his countrymen approved.

But with how different a conception of the happy personality he had set out on his literary career! It is generally forgotten that his first book was not on birds, was not "Wake-Robin," but "Notes on Walt Whitman as Poet and Person," 1867, a book long out of print. It was written in Washington, when Burroughs was a clerk

in the Treasury Department. On Sunday mornings "glorious" Walt, whom he had met in 1863, would drop off the street car—usually late—to eat flap-jacks and maple syrup with John and his wife. Once John took Walt over to Baltimore to hear Emerson lecture.

There, spiritually, were father, son, and grandson. There should have been the live line of American letters. In a long essay, "The Flight of the Eagle," included in the volume called "Birds and Poets," 1877, Burroughs returned to his theme, that Whitman was our one man like Homer, our one man, fierce and gentle as a god. In 1896 he rounded out his theme with "Whitman, a Study," an admirable piece of interpretation, expressing his mature conviction that Whitman was the only absolutely great man in American literature. Emerson had perfected the theory of a native democratic poetry; Whitman had incarnated it; and Burroughs adored the incarnation all through his life. "One thing I plume myself upon," he said, in 1906, "and that is that I saw the greatness of the poet from the first."

All Burroughs's significant general ideas are derived or deduced from Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman. He originated little or nothing. Whenever his style shows tension, incision, epigrammatic force, Emerson or Thoreau is prodding him. What is his importance as a critic? He early welcomed the modern movement. He eagerly interpreted it from 1860, the date of his essay on "Expression," onward. He repudiated classicism, academicism, New England moralism and the bloodless, sexless "intellectuality" which New England spinsters and a certain sort of professor have always regarded as the perfect flower of civilization. Until his judgment

was mollified by the charm of social contacts, he scorned all the distinguished representatives of the "genteel tradition," such as Lowell, Longfellow, Higginson and G. W. Curtis.

Hearing in 1866 that W. D. Howells was going to the literary staff of "The Atlantic," Burroughs hurried off an article on Whitman, hoping it would arrive before Howells did. But not in time—" 'Willie dear' was there ahead of me, and, of course, it was not accepted. . . . But if I could write to please Howells and 'Babie Bell' Aldrich, I should be ashamed to let my left hand know what my right hand doeth." Ironical fact that he was soon hitting their taste perfectly.

In 1876 he writes to Dowden, apropos of a journalistic outbreak against Whitman:

> You can hardly understand, from your distance, what a miserable puling set of editors and poets we have in this country. Such an utter absence of anything manly, broad, robust, is disheartening. They say that the reason Whitman is more popular in England than here is that the Englishman has grown blasé, sated with order and conformity, and craves the wild and lawless. But the real reason is that we are a race of pygmies, and in comparison your authors and reviewers are a race of giants.
>
> All our rising literary men in this country are of the superfine sort—very knowing, very quick, bright, deft, smart, but without any port, or stomach, or bowels, or carnality, or sexuality, or proper manliness.
>
> I heartily wish some British reviewer would take them up fairly, dispassionately, and show how they all run to mere refinement, mere finger tips, and that in trying so hard, as the Tribune says they are, to get away from

the conditions represented by Whitman, they are getting away from the only sources of power and fresh inspiration.

I see by a paragraph in the Tribune that you have been reviewing Lowell's "Study Windows." I hope you will smash some of them in. I can't endure the man.

Twenty years later, in his book on Whitman, Burroughs returns to the charge that America, bold in politics and industry, is "in spiritual and imaginative regions, timid, conforming, imitative. There is, perhaps, no civilized country in the world wherein the native original man, the real critter, as Whitman loved to say, that underlies all our culture and conventions, crops out so little in manners, in literature and in social usages. The fear of being unconventional is greater with us than the fear of death."

In theory, one sees that Burroughs "returned to nature," and that he embraced the dangerous explosive doctrines of nature's prophet, Emerson, and of nature's priest, Whitman—doctrines developed in New England, to be sure, but destined to blow the New England school to pieces and to destroy its traditional repressive philosophy. His theory demanded a burly man of letters, with a hearty admixture of the animal, expressing with full-blooded passion, the uniqueness of a many sided individuality, writing his autobiography "in colossal cipher." In theory, he should have pioneered beyond Whitman and have advanced American letters beyond "Leaves of Grass"—to which, by the way, he contributed the hermit thrush in the Lincoln dirge and the suggestion elaborated in "The Dalliance of the Eagles."

Instead of doing anything like that, however, Bur-

roughs domesticated, tamed and expurgated himself till he became more New Englandish than the New Englanders. Whitman recognized that Burroughs was not really "one of them" on the convivial side: "John cannot let himself go." John couldn't let himself out. He held himself in, till he lapsed into the leadership of the most ladylike, genteel and decorous literary movement that has appeared among us.

He made knowing the birds, the beasts and the flowers —with an illustrated guide-book and a pair of opera-glasses—as popular as tea drinking, bridge or philately. Bird lists begat bird journals; bird journals begat nature essays; nature essays begat magazines, and college courses in "seeing the birds." Presently there were schools of nature writers for "Oom John" to smile upon, and schools of nature fakers for him and T. R. to denounce. He, settling down in various cottages by the Hudson, raises grapes and celery, cultivates floral and faunal society, writes very nice "love letters" to "sweethearts" and "granddaughters" at Vassar, Smith and Mount Holyoke, and, for sixty years, contributes to "The Atlantic Monthly" essays on out-of-door life as mild and wholesome as cup custard—"confectionery" is the word which he used of Longfellow.

Burroughs was little interested in scientific ornithology, though the interest of science and modern philosophy grew upon him in later years. He plumes himself on correcting Wilson and Audubon. He quotes from the "genial" Nuttall. But he carries no studious dust into the woods and he brings none back. Comparing himself with literary naturalists, he finds Gilbert White more a scientist and Thoreau more a naturalist than he. In

many ways he acknowledges that Thoreau was a master whose shoestrings he was not worthy to unloose. Thoreau cut deep with the entire force of his character behind the sharpened blade of his style. But Burroughs considered himself a better observer than Thoreau, and he insisted that his interest in nature was different. His was neither scientific nor moral, but "artistic." When writing he was concerned with picturing the living bird and its habitat. When in the field his interest, like that of the hunter and fisher, was in the pursuit and the discovery. It was a gentle form of sport, and he spoke of its delights with contagious joy.

I do not wish to underestimate the purity and charm of Burroughs's essays in natural history nor their wide and salutary influence. Bird collecting, as now pursued with opera-glasses—John Burroughs insisted on a gun—is an exquisitely innocent mania, drawing in its wake troops of sweet sanities. I see no reason to quarrel with Roosevelt's fine dedicatory sentence addressed to his companion and historian in the Yellowstone: "It is good for our people that you have lived." Nothing that Roosevelt crammed into his own brimming career can be contemplated with less regret than his pursuit of the white-throated sparrow. When I open "Oom John's" books anywhere, though I do not feel gripped by a powerful personality, I am pervaded by a gentle wonder why I don't drop my vicious sedentary habit and go a-bird-hunting in "God's great outdoors."

Take the first essay, "The Return of the Birds," in the first bird book, "Wake-Robin," with its fresh little portraits of the bluebird, the robin, the phœbe, the field sparrow, the catbird, the marauding blacksnake, the hen-

hawk and the spirited distinction between the wood-thrush and the hermit thrush. It almost persuades me that birds are as interesting as people; as different in their habits, manners, humors and character; and, year in and year out, the scolding tongue of a blue-jay is preferable to that of a shrewish wife, for law and Gospel do not oblige one to listen to it.

When I turn from the books to the pictures of the patriarch in his eighty-fourth year, with his majestic white head and snowy beard, they put me into a revery, like the ancient *sequoia sempervirens* in Muir Woods. So many troubling things have swept by these staunch old trunks, leaving them standing serene in the same spot, with birds overhead and under foot flowers. There are times surely when the evening hymn of the hermit thrush calls to the hearts of all of us for inward listening: "O holy, holy! O clear away, clear away! O clear up, clear up!" There are moods when I take a faint, curious pleasure in remembering that old John Burroughs was bird hunting during the Battle of Gettysburg; that he turned away from Abe Lincoln's "Second Inaugural" to see "spring inaugurated," and that he listened, while the wind roared like a lion over the woods—he listened on March 4, 1865, and heard the soft, sweet note of the Canada sparrow and found bluets in bloom.

WILLIAM BEEBE AS MERMAN

THE world is full of symbols, opaque as a wall or transparent as a window, according to the penetrative virtue of the light one carries. When William Beebe was a youth studying birds in a city park he saw in a tree above his head a green parrot. It gave him a thrill. For mysteriously the parrot became a magic casement through which he looked into the tropical wildernesses girdling the world.

Upon many of us I think William Beebe himself works a similar romantic sorcery. Seen in a lecture hall he may be externally envisaged without much emotion; a tall, thinnish New Yorker in a dinner coat, strolling to the front of the platform and chatting with a slightly bored air of "this whirling ball of mud" which we inhabit as if there were not much left in "this astral pill" to excite a man of fifty to rise in the morning. But he is a green parrot in a city park—feeling rather humorous about it.

While our eyes and ears are considering his studious nonchalance he begins to grow transparent, we look through him as through an open window, shapes arise beyond him. At the end of the vista we see under the towering snow-capped peaks of Orizaba and Popocatepetl the tiny figure of an infatuated bird lover pursuing scarlet flashes through the cactus and mesquite of sultry, alkaline Mexican tablelands till he emerges gasping at

some inspiration point of Cortez or Balboa, and stares at the Pacific. We see this same gaunt nonchalance pushing into the wilderness along the jungle-walled rivers of Venezuela and British Guiana into the tangled recesses where the sloth and the anaconda slumber under the thunder of the Kaieteur Falls. We see a hunter of Asiatic pheasants high up in India and Tibet testing the strength of a wall of wind by leaning far out over a chasm against it as it roars up out of an abyss in the Himalayas. We see the forgotten islands of the Galápagos and a gay band of scientific picknickers there playing with sea-lions, iguanas and tortoises. And now again we see a queer helmeted figure rising out of the ocean, crowned with jade-colored grapes of the Sargasso Sea, and, having shaken the brine from his limbs, crawling on hands and knees up a slope of hot lava to sit on the lip of a red volcano.

If one looks at William Beebe with some of his books in mind—"Two Bird Lovers in Mexico," 1905; "The Log of the Sun," 1906; "Our Search for a Wilderness," 1911; "Jungle Peace," 1918, or "Edge of the Jungle," 1921; "Galápagos: World's End," 1923, and this new book, "The Arcturus Adventure," 1926—a personality emerges to which that dinner coat and that indifferent air seem a curiously irrelevant garb. I wish to say how that personality affects my imagination when, concentrating, I try to take it all in, and I think of things like these: that William Beebe is as long and lank and brown as the Ancient Mariner; that he is as bald and dictatorial and ambitious as Julius Cæsar; that he opens up the wonders of the universe like Prospero; that he is the Childe

Harold of zoology; and that he is as hungry to extend the frontiers of experience as Faust.

But here I must make a distinction. When Faust was satiated with the saw-dust of learning he sat in his study and raised the devil. William Beebe would not go at it in that way. If he had any curiosity to see so banal a creature, he would devise some ingenious means of observing the Prince of Darkness performing his functions at ease and unembarrassed in his own realm. He would give us a fresh and original devil's-eye view of the universe and not the old homocentric view of the devil.

In science, as in poetry, progress and the insights of genius are vouchsafed to men with courage to become one with the object which they describe—as in experimental medicine one learns the effects of germs and toxins by putting them into one's blood. "If anything is worth studying intensively," says Mr. Beebe, "one must absolutely identify one's self with it. Some of the greatest joys of my life come when I shed the unlovely manbody thing which I am condemned to carry about through life as transportation and periscope to my mind and soul. For the time being I must become pheasant, protozoan, sloth or tree."

The ancient philosophers held that the universe is composed of four elements: earth, air, fire and water. Mr. Beebe has long enjoyed the freedom of the first two. As lover and curator of birds, he has sought the bird's-eye view by following all winged things from whatever swinging bough or crag or rocky surge-washed cradle held the egg through the whole life course to the highest flight of the soaring eagle, supplementing his avian sym-

pathies by over three hundred flights of his own, on one of which he looked down on our small concerns, while "sailing with supreme dominion through the azure deep of air"—at an altitude of 22,000 feet in the blue inane. For what can a taxidermist know of eagles? What can a man know of eagles who has never dared to go up where they go in the high moments of their lives? In kindred spirit Mr. Beebe has sought in the jungle the outlook of the larger vertebrates and he has been belly-flat for the snake's view and the worm's view and for the views of the Lilliputian myriads whose tenement is any yard of earth to which the patient microscopist lays siege.

The distinguishing feature of "The Arcturus Adventure" is its record of penetration into fire and, still more, into water. The deep-sea fish is the symbol of this book as the iguana was the symbol of "Galápagos." To explore the element of subterranean fire Mr. Beebe has filled his lungs with volcanic gas, till like the earth itself he was full enough for utterance. He has watched the birth pangs of a molten river, splitting into five separate streams, "which crawled down the hundred-foot cliffs like the tentacles of some huge scarlet octopus." As a denizen of the four elements one observes that his memory is stocked with unique experiences and that his imagination makes novel combinations of images. I venture the guess that he is the first observer on the planet who has stood on the bottom of the ocean watching the play of sea lions and the bright spheric bubbles of their breath ascending, coalescing as they went—and has thought that this string of bubbles looked "like a puff

of smoke from an airplane engine, or the blossoming of white shrapnel against a blue sky."

In the spring of 1923 this venturous master of the four elements, in the yacht Noma, with a scientific staff of fourteen members, made an expedition to the Galápagos archipelago, abbreviated by a shortage of coal and water, and returned with a rich cargo of drawings, photographs, notes, slides and beasts, birds, fishes, insects and plankton for further scientific study or to add to the exhibits in the Zoological Park and the American Museum. In the following year Mr. Beebe, assisted by Ruth Rose, the historian of the party, published a large and handsomely illustrated book, "Galápagos," which with astonishing vividness and gusto admitted the general public to all the large excitement of the long voyage, and the voyagers to the enthusiastic exploration of the islands, to their romantic history, and to some acquaintance with multitudes of the brilliant and uncouth creatures which fly, walk, waddle, creep and swim at that odd outpost of the world.

I know of just one book that can stand comparison with "Galápagos" and that is "The Arcturus Adventure." Rumor must have run ahead of Mr. Beebe, reporting that he was a masterly organizer of a sea-going scientific expedition, for he had scarcely set foot in New York after the voyage of 1923 when another ship was offered him for a new voyage. The Arcturus sailed on her six months' cruise February 10, 1925, carrying a scientific staff of seventeen, selected and outfitted to conduct the New York Zoological Society's first oceanographic expedition.

The larger avowed purposes of the expedition were to

investigate the Humboldt Current and to clear up the ancient mystery of the Sargasso. But at the point where they expected a rendezvous with the current there was not a trace of it. As for the Sargasso Sea, storms had so shattered its fabulous morass that only with diligence could be found a piece of weed the size of a man's head, floating in a hundred square yards of sea. These negative results could not daunt a party which could detect more miracles in a bucket of sea water than most of us would observe in all the ocean between here and Liverpool.

From the unprofitable Sargasso Sea the Arcturus steamed on to Cocos and the Galápagos. A roving laboratory it was, working day and night, drawing, dissecting, fishing, sounding, dredging, with seventeen scientists ready to rush on deck when the hoarse fishhorn signaled any form of life visible in sea or sky. One of Mr. Beebe's intentions on this trip was to make, or to begin, such an intensive study of a selected area of the sea, from the surface to the bottom, as he made on land in his half section of Guiana jungle.

That purpose was partly accomplished. The incredible abundance of marine life was demonstrated. Countless thousands of specimens were taken from the plankton of the surface to inconceivably grotesque little monsters from the cold, black depths of a mile. What wild dream of dragons can match this catch? Here are wine-colored crabs and white worms, creatures without eyes, creatures all mouth, eye and stomach, creatures colored like the rainbow, creatures bearing lanterns over their heads or just in front of their mouths, creatures escaping from enemies in clouds of ink, others hiding

themselves in bursts of light, some so small that a tablespoon would hold a city's population and one devil-fish eighteen feet from tip to tip, weighing 2,310 pounds.

The "high lights" of this expedition, as Mr. Beebe rates them, were not on the program when the Arcturus set out. How could they know that Albemarle Island was about to blow its lid off in a great volcanic eruption for their benefit? Or that the albatrosses—vast-winged rare birds, who seem to spend most of their lives between sea and sky—had made a rookery on Hood Island, and were "at home" for familiar domestic inspection? Or that they were to encounter a "temporary current rip" in mid-ocean, where two currents meeting made a wall of water hundreds of miles long swarming with life swept there from a wide surface of the sea? Or that they were to discover in New York on their return a German sailor, August Gissler, who spent twenty years on Cocos hunting for pirates' treasure—with a tale to match the turtle-eating taxi-driver of Galápagos? Or what new visions of the submarine world and the possibilities of its conquest were to result from the hundreds of dives in a copper helmet and bathing suit? Or the deep-sea work which was to open up on the way home in the submerged Hudson Gorge, only a hundred miles from New York City?

"In publishing 'The Arcturus Adventure,' " says Mr. Beebe, "my object . . . differs in no respect from that of the account of my last expedition, 'Galápagos: World's End,'—a scientifically accurate popular presentation of the high lights and vivid experience of the expedition." The book is indeed built in the same fashion as its predecessor—with hooks craftily baited to

catch and hold a public which is friendly to natural history, but which has not yet developed a very passionate interest in plankton. When a dolphin was hauled aboard the Arcturus the crew—a good specimen "public"—thanked God they had got a visible fish—even as you and I, gentle reader, would have done.

The emphasis of the narrative and of the seventy-seven illustrations, in color and in black and white, falls on incidents and animals which would arrest the gait of the man in the street—on sharks, devil-fish, albatrosses, sea-lions, volcanoes, a treasure island, and diving; and when it falls on little things they are either strange and marvelous enough to make Marco Polo stare, or else they have been skillfully related by the narrator to some pretty question such as this: Suppose an island should rise out of the sea sixty miles from a given land: How many plants and animals would wind and waves and traveling birds deposit there by the end of a month?

When he is too old for active exploration, Mr. Beebe declares that he will settle down on such an island, if he has to build one himself, and "watch the accidental populating—the simple beginnings of the struggle for existence between seed and seed, animal and animal. Then, perhaps, I shall see a little more clearly into the meanings of the apparent terrible confusions already in full swing, which in great jungles so cobweb my brain and mind."

With the work of exploration and of collecting specimens distributed among his staff of specialists, Mr. Beebe was able to spend much of his time at the islands in his diving helmet at the bottom of the sea, pushing back the borders of the unknown. The excitement of the

submarine or fish-eye view of the universe grew upon him daily. When he first went down, there was a bit of disillusion. Looking through the panes of his helmet and seeing fish swimming about was rather like looking through the glass of the Aquarium in New York. But he recalled the advice of a friend on the proper conduct of adventurers in new worlds:

It consists merely in shutting your eyes when you are in the midst of a great moment, or close to some marvel of time or space, and convincing yourself that you are at home again with the experience over and past; and what would you wish most to have examined or done if you could turn time and space back again. . . . I sat down on a convenient rock, shut my eyes, and recited my lesson: *I am not at home, nor near any city or people; I am far out in the Pacific on a desert island, sitting on the bottom of the ocean; I am deep under water in a place where no human being has ever been before; it is one of the greatest moments of my whole life; thousands of people would pay large sums, would forego much for five minutes of this.* . . . That was enough.

Mr. Beebe went down so often that, if there is anything in "adaptation," his fingers and toes must have begun to web and the incipience of fins to manifest itself. He remained submerged till his blood became as cool as a merman's. In the green stillness he explored coral banks and caves by a pale sun filtered through thirty feet of emerald water. He haunted the society of schools of fish till he knew traits and markings of many individuals and could have called them by name. With a bit of raw crab meat he drew troops of them after him

like the Pied Piper. Sometimes he held himself still as death and let hundreds of them drift curiously past him till he felt like the viewed "remains" at a funeral. When big shadowy sharks came nosing up he had at first awe-struck moments, but repeated experiment proved to his own satisfaction that an uninjured man in a helmet and bathing suit will not be molested by the common variety. Concerning the man-eating propensity of the tiger-shark he suspends judgment. Sitting one day on a rock in a swaying forest of amber, he watched a devil-fish pass over his head as big as a barn door, shutting out day-light; and he took that in as a thing which might not pass his way again.

So far as I am aware no other man combining Mr. Beebe's science and his letters has ever made himself so thoroughly at ease and at home under the sea. So far as I know his picture of submarine life is unique in its truth, beauty, wonder and seductive power over the reader's imagination. I have myself as little appetite for diving down "where the blind white sea-snakes are" as I have for flying across the great white wastes at the poles. But I am grateful to Mr. Beebe as I am to the sailors who first crossed the surface of the Pacific. Other divers there have been for pearls, wrecks, sunken treasure. He has dived in the spirit of Columbus, to discover a new world. His report from the borders of it has an exciting fresh eloquence and an imagery that is lustrous, rich, and strange. It is thrilling with his eager sense of untrodden vistas, unfathomed caverns and canyons, wide untraversed continents, filled with unimaginable marvels—waiting for their Magellan.

PAUL BUNYAN AND THE BLUE OX

THE reported discovery in our northern lumber camps of a genuine heroic myth, developed within the last seventy-five years, reeking of American soil and American humor and imagination, still growing like the beanstalk of Jack-the-Giant-killer, and comparable with the large tales of Hercules and Jason—this was news, exciting as the discovery of gold in the Klondike, to hearts reluctant to believe that the creative spirit had gasped out its last fetid breath in the Montparnassian Odyssey of James Joyce. Out of the tall timber of Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Washington, there was a figure looming not unworthy of a land of pioneers, a land of Leatherstockings, David Crocketts, Daniel Boones, Andy Jacksons, Sam Houstons, Lewis and Clarke, Kit Carsons, Fremonts, Carnegies, Roosevelts, Pearys, Gorgases, and Henry Fords. I have not piled up these names merely because I like the sound of them. I bring them in rather to indicate the devouring nature of this Paul Bunyan cycle: as the hero moves westward he clothes himself in the enterprises of all pioneers.

Like all the great folk stories, the legends of the giant lumberjack Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox long remained plastic before the literate began shaping them into a continuous narrative. Numerous collectors assert that they have been familiar with them from childhood.

They came to me by word of mouth, from a tow-haired

Swedish-American bard, Carl Sandburg, who has an innate feeling for popular balladry and folklore, and, plucking the strings of his old guitar, croons out the bloody ballads of the Kentucky mountaineers as if his heart would break with the brooding on the passion of such refrains as "He done her wro-ong." I shall never hear mention of Paul Bunyan without recalling the glowing excitement in Carl Sandburg's voice and eyes when he told me that Babe the Blue Ox measured "forty-two ax handles and a Star tobacco box between the eyes." For the moment of communication, he had the wonder and faith of a child, without which folklore is poor stuff. At his touch, instantly we were in the age of fable when deeds of note were done, when far-traveling heroes laid out the sites of new cities with a bull's hide, and the huge blue beast came in as naturally as possible, with his red nostrils snorting as he strained against the yoke pulling the crooks out of eighteen miles of logging road down in St. Croix.

Some say that Paul Bunyan and his ox never existed. Some assert that he was an historical character. Some portray him as a giant. Some represent him as a god. Several witnesses testify that they have actually worked with him or have known men who were in his camps. In 1916, academic investigators said, "Whether Paul Bunyan ever lived, or is as mythical as Sairey Gamp's Mrs. Harris, we haven't succeeded in finding out. . . . Some of the older men even claim to have known him or members of his crew, and in northern Minnesota the supposed location of his grave is actually pointed out." In 1924 Esther Shephard * writes: "Some evidence points to a

* *Paul Bunyan* by Esther Shephard. Seattle, 1924.

French Canadian origin among the loggers of Quebec or Ontario . . . but other evidence points just as strongly to an American beginning, possibly in Michigan or Wisconsin." In her version, he was born in Maine, and, at last accounts, had not died, but was sailing toward the Arctic Circle. James Stevens * unhesitatingly asserts that the legend originated in a bearded giant named Paul Bunyan, who actually fought in the Papineau Rebellion of 1837. To credit that, we have only to believe that James Stevens met Louis Letourneau in Puyallup, Washington; that Louis introduced him to his father-in-law, a logger of ninety years named L. Bernèche; that this nonogenarian had an uncle, Collet Bellaine; and that Collet Bellaine "fought by the side of Paul Bunyan." Believe it if you like.

There are French Canadian and Swedish hands on the myth but all commentators attribute its main development to the American spirit of inflation—to that love of expansive yarning with which we are familiar in Mark Twain, in Frank Stockton, and in the industrious artists who produce the much abused comic supplements. Opie Dildock is a Paul Bunyan created in a newspaper office. These stories originated in lumbermen's shanties, usually in competition, and frequently they were told *pour épater* the visiting greenhorn. In his more primitive form Paul Bunyan was a humorous lumberjack's conception of a super-lumberjack. He was illiterate, and kept the time of his men by cutting notches in a stick, and ordered supplies for his camp by drawing rough pictures. His conspicuous characteristics were three. He was big and had bull strength. He was quick-witted

* *Paul Bunyan* by James Stevens. New York, 1925.

and ingenious and could "figure" a way out of any difficulty. No task was too formidable for him to undertake: he was never stumped. The real backwoods narrator develops these characteristics with great gravity, with circumstantial detail, with habitual description of causes by effects, and with the tone and accent of good faith essential to artistic illusion.

Mrs. Shephard, a far-westerner who has collected many of her stories at first hand, has, I think, quite successfully attempted to tell them as the lumbermen tell them, only weaving them into one continuous narrative, put in the mouth of a speaker of the vernacular, who knows the entire cycle from the birth of Paul to his disappearance. Finding the tone and accent of her collection radically different from that of James Stevens, who professes to be doing the same thing and to have similar access to first-hand information, I have pried a little into the accounts of Paul Bunyan published before the appearance of these two interesting books, which are the first elaborate attempts to bring the material into literature. Mrs. Shephard's preface sent me first to the Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters for 1916, where I found a twelve page article by K. Bernice Stewart and Homer A. Watt, original collectors, compactly summarizing the legends but not attempting to reproduce the flavor of lumberjack speech. I then examined two advertising pamphlets put out by the Red River Lumber Company, containing a good string of the stories told as a jolly advertising man would write; one of these pamphlets is dated at Minneapolis, 1922. Last I read the artistic little pamphlet published at the University of Oregon, without

date, by Ida Virginia Turney, entitled "Paul Bunyan Comes West."

In the light of these documents one can see the "myth" growing under one's eyes.

In the earlier versions, centering in the midwest, Paul is rather a giant than a god. In the Wisconsin summary he is but seven feet tall, with a stride of seven feet. The Blue Ox is but seven feet from horn to horn, or, at the most, between the eyes. The stories, however, are hardly in scale. Paul sharpens his axe on a grindstone of which one revolution measures a pay day. To keep his pipe filled requires the entire time of a man with a scoop shovel. His capacity for drink and obscenity are lightly glided over, but he eats like Gargantua, and seven men with seven wheelbarrows are kept busy carting the prune stones from the cook house. He shoots a duck at such an altitude that it spoils before it reaches the ground. A blast on his dinner horn blows down the lumber on a tract of sixty acres. Assistant cooks grease his hot-cake griddle by skating across it with hunks of bacon strapped to their feet. His cook goes for a load of wood, driving an ox with a buckskin harness through a heavy rain. Returning to camp with the ox, he observes that the load of wood is out of sight behind a bend in the road. The harness has stretched. He ties the ox and eats his dinner. In the meantime the sun comes out, dries the harness, and its contraction hauls the wood into camp. The Blue Ox pulls an entire section to the river; when he is shod, it is necessary to open a new iron mine in Minnesota.

As he travels westward, Paul Bunyan becomes less of a super-lumberjack and more of a nature myth, more of

a divinity. Dragging his pick, he trenches out the Grand Canyon. On the coast he branches out into all sorts of engineering and commercial enterprises. He builds bridges, digs canals and river basins and mountain passes. He scoops out Puget Sound with a glacier brought from Alaska, and piles up Mt. Rainier with the refuse of his excavations. His camps are colossal: a waiter is sent on an errand to the far end of the table and his grandson comes back in his stead. He puts up a hotel with the last seven stories on hinges, so that they can swing down to let the moon go by. Clearly this isn't primitive lumberjack stuff at all, but the booming voice of the "bigger, better, busier" Pacific Coast, where modern machinery and efficiency experts have displaced rude muscle and untutored wit.

Now to fuse the far-western "nature myths" with the older lumberjack stories was a difficult task in the age of radio and airplane. My faith evaporates before the Puget Sound story. But Ida Virginia Turney in her "Paul Bunyan Comes West" showed at least how the far-western feats of the hero could be made as artistically plausible as possible. She put the stories in the mouth of a single narrator, one "Yank," dwelling in the valley of the Willamette, and, she says, "undoubtedly the only living witness of the doings of Paul." Yank possesses a vernacular style in which he envelops and takes possession of his material. He has the solemn circumstantiality of the born American liar; and he is almost credible as he drawls out: "He drug the pick 'long behind him to ease his shoulder a spell an' it made quite a scratch in the river bed tho' 'twuz thru solid rock. That thar scratch is the Colorado Canyon."

In Mrs. Shephard's "Paul Bunyan" the artistic problem is solved in the same fashion. She maintains the air of simplicity and good faith by giving us the entire cycle on the tongue of a lumberjack, who deliciously introduces his anecdotes with a "Like I was tellin' you," and very consistently and delightfully keeps in his tune. Paul used to walk ahead through the woods making a corduroy road as he walked, the Blue Ox following close behind: "I used to like to see 'em—Paul comin' through the woods that way slashin' with his ax, with the clean timber road layin' there behind him, and the streak of light showin' through the dark pine trees, and the Big Blue Ox comin' along there behind with the load, chewin' his cud as easy and peaceful as if he'd been goin' into his barn in Paul's camp on the Red River." I can believe that, and things more incredible, from this narrator. If you want the Paul Bunyan cycle as lumberjacks tell the stories, with a humorous faith in them, with the smell of the white pine timber in them, Mrs. Shephard is your author.

As for Mr. James Stevens: he tells us that he was born in Iowa, has been a teamhand, a four-truck driver, a walking boss, a soldier, a logger in California, has worked in the logging camps and sawmills of Oregon and Washington, and that he is now living not far from a sawmill in Tacoma. An ex-lumberjack who has collected the legends in the bunkhouse, he would seem to be the ideal narrator of the Paul Bunyan story. In his entertaining preface he tells us just how the camp storytellers spun their yarns: and he rouses great expectations. One indispensable talent, however, he lacks: he has no gift whatever, so far as this book shows, for

imaginative and persuasive American lying—that is, for poetical and creative lying. There is only one tall story between the covers of his book which completely took me in. It is this, on page 6 of the Introduction: "It is the method of the old bards that I have attempted to follow in this book."

That is a "whopper."

I find nowhere the faintest indication that Mr. Stevens has followed the method of the old bards. If he ever possessed the vernacular of the woods, he must have discarded it with his mackinaw when he began to study Menckenese for the "American Mercury." He writes very fair Menckenese for the "Mercury"; but for his "Paul Bunyan" he has tried to invent something better, something more belletristic; and he has fallen upon an extraordinary prettyfied, pseudo-poetical jargon which is proper to neither beast, bird, nor fish. He has transmogrified the illiterate hero of the tradition into a pondering, psychologizing poet, scholar, orator, historian, and industrialist. In long brooding day-dreams of his youth on the Canadian Border, he meditates crossing over and becoming a REAL AMERICAN. Finally he does cross, changing his name from Bunyon to Bunyan, and the name of his ox from Bébé to Babe, in token of their naturalization:

" 'We are now Real Americans both, hearts, souls and hides.'

"After uttering these words with feeling and solemnity, an emotion more expansive, more uplifting and more inspiring than any he had ever known possessed Paul Bunyan and transfigured him."

Briefly speaking, Mr. Stevens has converted Paul Bun-

yan from folklore to farce, and prepared it for the motion pictures, the burlesque show, or the comic strips—probably with some dim satirical intention. His book, then, does not in any sense overlap Mrs. Shephard's. The student of the legends will desire them both, just as the student of Robin Hood desires to read the old ballads, and also to hear the opera of De Koven. If you want Paul Bunyan "jazzed up" to the minute, James Stevens is your author.

MARK TWAIN'S LAST PHASE

I HAVE never gone to the life and works of Mark Twain without a lurking feeling of dissatisfaction, and I have never left them without a conviction that he is one of those great men of letters whom we shall always revisit and about whom the "last word" will never be uttered. If he is in this class, it is the sign of a narrow and petty mind to be mainly occupied with his shortcomings or to let the final emphasis rest there.

Mark Twain intended to return to us in the Autobiography not to ask alms of commemoration from posterity but to contribute to strictly contemporaneous interests. To what extent is he successful? It is an incentive to alert reading—recommended somewhere, I believe, in the critical miscellanies of Lord Morley—to set down in black and white before beginning to read a new book what additions to one's knowledge or ideas one expects to derive from it.

What did we know about the life of Mark Twain before the appearance of the Autobiography? 1. A large portion of the work published in his lifetime—at least seven or eight volumes—was as pure autobiography as he was ever capable of writing. 2. Selections of the Autobiography appeared in "The North American Review" from September, 1906, to December, 1907. 3. In 1912 Mr. Paine produced the fascinating authorized Biography in three volumes, drawing freely upon the

Autobiography and other sources over which he had complete command. 4. In 1917 Mr. Paine published also in two substantial volumes "Mark Twain's Letters," thus adding some intimacy to a record which had apparently left little to be desired. 5. The pessimism of the humorist, which had been somewhat repressed in his lifetime, was further illuminated by the posthumous publication of "What Is Man?" and "The Mysterious Stranger," perhaps the bitterest little tale ever sent out to enliven the Christmas holidays. 6. Finally, besides scores of other partial portraits and studies, we had W. D. Howells's delightful "My Mark Twain" and Mr. Van Wyck Brooks's striking and original inquisition called "The Ordeal of Mark Twain."

Having read the 720 pages of the Autobiography, I have first to testify that, as far as reporting the main events and colors in the procession of his life is concerned, Mark Twain has clearly allowed himself to be scooped at least twice—first in the Biography and then in the letters. He has but gleaned after the man who reaped the main harvest, adding a few strokes of malice, perhaps, and a few touches of intimacy to minor figures, but modifying very little the essentials of the previous record and wholly omitting many of the essentials. He deserved to be scooped, because Mr. Paine carried out thoroughly and conscientiously and with adequate skill a good orthodox plan, and made a very good book, while Mark Twain, in the weariness of age and the nonchalance of sufficient glory, adopted a highly questionable plan, pursued a poor method in a slack and desultory fashion, and produced, or left behind him, a book which, as an autobiography, is pretty bad.

His plan, when he discovered that he wasn't making much progress with the handwritten autobiographical chapters which he had begun in 1897—his lazy man's plan was to abandon the labor of composition and, starting in anywhere, on any subject that presented itself to him after breakfast, talk about it to Mr. Paine, in the presence of a stenographer, as long as it vividly held his own interest and then to pass abruptly to another subject. The result is not a dull book but a kind of superior hodgepodge—a great man's hodgepodge, full of fine things, many of which we have seen before in better order.

I regret to make this report, because of my suspicion that this interesting hodgepodge almost blundered into becoming an arresting experiment in a new form. This suspicion rests upon a conviction that Mark Twain did not in his later years go to seed. He did not, like many septuagenarians, fall to the rear and drop out of the procession thirty or forty years behind the moving front of his times. As far as I can make out, he grew in sympathy, insight, bitterness, courage and passion to the end.

At seventy he was a clear-eyed youth, pushing steadily forward toward a fresh conception of reality and coming far nearer in spirit to the young men who are twenty in 1924 than many men who were twenty in 1900. Some of us had to wait for the sad years of the Great War, some of us for the sadder years after the war and some of us are still waiting, for the vision which came to him sharply in the last decade of the nineteenth century from observation of misery in India, in the atrocities of history, from personal sorrow, from the Spanish War and the Boer War and the pacification of the Philippines. In

his later years his vision of human misery and futility intensified. It drove him upon a drastic revision in beliefs and hopes, a revision in the directions of that pessimism in which many youths of the present day find the only rational basis for the integration of their ideas, for the establishment of their faith.

In order to become an individual one must cease to be a crowd. Mark Twain had been a "crowd" for a large part of his life. He had been a "representative" man, expressing adequately the common sense of great masses of his countrymen. In his last phase he was disengaging himself from the crowd. He was becoming an individual. He was struggling with an attempt to express with poignant veracity his own sense. He had thus become capable—almost capable—of revising and rewriting his entire work in a new light, in a new manner, from a fresh point of view, as Henry James rewrote his, as George Moore is rewriting his—with a conviction that his old work was no longer properly his. If he could have cast off entirely the lyceum lecturer and the after-dinner speaker, if he had possessed the patience and the literary flexibility to weave himself a complete set of new clothes appropriate to his later vision, he might have treated, once again, the old materials of his life with impunity—without suffering by comparison with his biographer. He might have come back from the grave with a really great personal record, such as he rosily dreamed of when he said:

I intend that this autobiography shall become a model for all future biographies when it is published, after my death, and I also intend that it shall be read a good many

centuries because of its form and method—a form and method whereby the past and the present are constantly brought face to face, resulting in contrasts which newly fire up the interest all along like contact of flint and steel.

When he wrote that sentence perhaps he deceived himself into believing that he had found what he was groping for and improvising rather than working out—a method for adequately expressing his latest sense of that reality which the world had seen through a glass darkly as Mark Twain—a new method, and not just the old method of the jolly miscellany which he had used in his travel books from the time of "The Innocents Abroad." What he wanted, to be sure, would have to resemble the old "form." He still required, for the carriage of his ultimate sense of reality, a vehicle capable of containing a welter of incongruities, a blare of dissonances, but it must be capable now of conveying steadily to the consciousness of his readers that pessimistic melody, that burden of pity and pathos and futility which, to his own mind, had become the ultimate meaning of all the blare and welter.

By intention, if not by accomplishment, he appears in the Autobiography to be, prophetically, in sympathy with that very modern and sophisticated groper, Mr. James Joyce, who has devoted a thick quarto to the physical and psychical life of a single day at rather unimportant centers. Mark Twain was beginning to be fascinated by the Mammoth Cave of the subconscious and the inarticulate. He, too, was almost overwhelmed by his sense of the insignificance of all recorded history and all visible events as compared with the immense quan-

tity of life which seethes invisible and unrecorded beneath the eye's horizon, on the turbulent sea of each microcosm, and in its salt unfathomed deeps, where slimy memories move in and out through the eye sockets of selves long dead and drowned.

He meditated while he was planning to make his Autobiography "devilish" and terrible to future generations —meditated flashing remorseless light into those deeps, but on page 331 of his second volume he confesses: "I have thought of fifteen hundred or two thousand incidents in my life which I am ashamed of, but I have not gotten one of them to go on paper yet. I think that that stock will still be complete and uncompared when I finish this autobiography, if I ever finish it." What he planned, of course, never could be a finished work of art, could only be a crowded moving picture of life, without beginning, middle or end.

What one might piece together out of the fragments of his unaccomplished purpose is a fairly coherent picture of a disillusioned, pessimistic youth of this present day; Mark Twain returning to keep us company in the not wholly joyless task of "cussing out" the universe. There are plenty of fine illustrations of his spleen in the book: his spleen at the Century Company over their dealings with General Grant in regard to his Memoirs; his spleen at the Players Club for sending him bills for his club dues; his spleen at Mrs. John Hay for being a fine lady and sweeping with supercilious disdain through one of his robust conversations with her husband; his spleen at an editor who tried to improve the English of his introduction to a book on Joan of Arc; his spleen at the inventor of his disastrous typesetting machine; his spleen

at the few creditors who were hard on him—all this he liberates freely, in the happy assurance that before this book can reach their eyes all these persons will be in hell. But that isn't very important, though the rhetorical mastery displayed on some of these occasions is notable, as, for example, this on a certain lawyer:

I have no feeling about him; I have no harsh words to say about him.

He is a great, fat, good-natured, kind-hearted, chicken-livered slave; with no more pride than a tramp, no more sand than a rabbit, no more moral sense than a wax figure, and no more sex than a tape-worm.

One might proceed to show that Mark Twain, like the younger American satirists of the present—and, in that respect, quite unlike his contemporary, Anatole France—has worked out his philosophy of contempt and misery much more fully than any compensatory philosophy of pleasure. He has an immense contempt for many of the petty virtues of his countrymen, which they set great store by; but he is in such a passion of rage over their major vices that he can never find the mood of epicureanism. His nearest approach to it is when he declares that he will never say a word against abandoning the smaller vices—it is such satisfaction to return to them!

The central objects of his hatred are the universe, for its inanity, and man, for his cruelty, hypocrisy, nastiness, subservience and cowardice. The arraignment cannot be illustrated here in full, but we may note his observation that "in one detail man is the moral peer of the cat"—he also indulges in cruelty for sport. As

for killing: "All creatures kill—but of the whole list man is the only one that kills for fun; he is the only one that kills in malice, the only one that kills in revenge. Also, he is the only one that has a nasty mind." From the illusion that the creature is really independent springs the other illusion that he has "something about him that ought to be perpetuated, in heaven or hell, or somewhere." As Mark Twain conceives it, the fact is that we are:

> The tail end of a tapeworm eternity of ancestors extending in linked procession back and back and back—to our source in the monkeys, with this so-called individuality of ours a decayed and rancid rush of inherited instincts and teachings derived, atom by atom, stench by stench, from the entire list of that sorry column, and not so much new and original matter in it as you could balance on a needle point and examine under a microscope.

The political aspect of our servility which most stirs his savage eloquence is "party loyalty," which turns voters into

> chattels, slaves, rabbits, and all the while their masters, and they themselves are shouting rubbish about country, independence, freedom of opinion, freedom of speech, honestly unconscious of the fantastic contradictions, and forgetting or ignoring that their fathers and the churches shouted the same blasphemies a generation earlier when they were closing their doors against the hunted slave, beating his handful of humane defenders with Bible texts and billies, and pocketing the insults and licking the shoes of his Southern master.

With his feet firmly planted upon this radical pessimism, Mark Twain achieved political disillusion; he achieved contempt for "Christian civilization"; he achieved disgust for military grandeur; he achieved hatred for every despotic power; he achieved loathing for every form of cruelty—from the husky ejection of a lady from Theodore Roosevelt's White House, at the hands of secretaries apparently inspired from above to "treat 'em rough," to the massacre of some six hundred Moros, men, women and children, in the bowl of an extinct volcano in Theodore Roosevelt's Philippines at the hands of General Wood in a fierce and splendid battle, in which fifteen of our soldiers perished. Because his heart was melancholy with a sense of the pathos and the futility of life, Mark Twain was becoming desperately enamored of pity and courage, peace and truth, and he was attaining a fresh vision of the perilous service which may be rendered to them in a servile world by a free spirit. He himself was not wholly free. He chafed in his chains, but he had broken many of them; and in the shape in which he comes among us now we must regard him as dangerous—like all free spirits. He cares no longer what John Hay's wife thinks of him.

POULTNEY BIGELOW: A SUPERSTATESMAN ON THE PERFECT LIFE

At Malden by the Hudson, on his ancestral acres, dwells Poultney Bigelow, a cynical sage of seventy, reveling in prejudices, a mettlesome gamecock, tough as a butternut, amusing as a chipmunk.

Simply as he lives there now, this unpretentious countryman of ours has had adventures to make Cellini envious—has been the playboy of august kings, has been amid shipwrecks and wars in all lands, and had *bonnes fortunes,* has swum naked in the blue Danube with Serbian maidens in the same costume, laughingly luring him to amorous encounter, and has bivouacked on pallets of straw in Parisian orgies with grooms and Russian princesses. Thus seasoned in wisdom, the old sage speaks to us out of bright worlds of experience which to most of us are merely fabulous. It is a rare opportunity for circumscribed Americans to learn what life in the real world is like.

The example of Henry Adams was to some extent responsible for Mr. Bigelow's conception of himself and for the beguiling cockiness of this work. Henry Adams had substantial scholarly achievements to his credit, but when he wrote "The Education" he was bent on showing that a vulgar democracy, such as the United States became after the Civil War, could open no suitable career to a man of his culture, talents and ancestry.

Following this example, Poultney Bigelow does not thrust his authorship forward. He does allude to his professorship of colonial expansion at Boston University. He does comment lightly on his four-volume "History of the German Struggle for Liberty," and perhaps mentions his half dozen books on political and colonial problems in Russia, Germany, Africa and the Far East. But clearly he feels that his interest as a man greatly surpasses his interest as an author. Like Adams, he is reticent about himself as a family man. What he paints for us in brilliant colors is the man of the great world who has been everywhere, met everybody of note and yet has never found any one who was his equal.

There are scores of harsh judgments in "Seventy Summers." Mr. Bigelow's contempt for the American consular and diplomatic service is unlimited. In Spain, in Japan, in France, in Germany, he gives the impression that we have ordinarily been represented by men who knew no language but American, had the manners and appearance of barkeepers and shot their quids of tobacco into Sèvres vases just before saying howdy to royalty. He pictures himself as turning up on diplomatic occasions just in time to give an ignorant ambassador a shove into the right place or to perform for him a function which, through ignorance, he had neglected. In Germany, in particular, Mr. Bigelow makes it obvious that he himself was the only conceivable choice for an intelligent government to have made. I don't mean to suggest that he anywhere admits the faintest desire for a diplomatic mission. He does not. But his incomparable superiority to all actual incumbents of that and the other chief posts—why, that leaps to the eyes. He

still hopes for the restoration of the German and Austrian monarchies.

I infer that Mr. Bigelow regrets the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution. If it had not been for them there would have been no custom houses between the Rio Grande and the Arctic Circle, and we might have dukes on Pennsylvania Avenue. He derides national policies, such as the Monroe Doctrine, and folk enterprises, such as Christian foreign missions, to which "our people" have been committed for a hundred years. He despises our colonial administration throughout. Anti-Semite and Negro-phobe, he disdainfully boots great masses of our population downstairs and sends them around to the back door.

It is a toss-up as to whether he execrates Theodore Roosevelt more than he despises Woodrow Wilson. He holds that the only Presidential candidate with any special qualification for the job since the Fathers was Tilden. The rest were a lot of roughnecks—or at least they were selected for qualities which bore no relation to their office, such as rail splitting, tanning hides, etc.

In prudence I should not have mentioned Mr. Bigelow's multifarious antipathies specifically till I had assured my readers that his temper is not really splenetic and venomous but unruffled and sweet—at ease and serene. If he seems to utter blasting breath up there at Malden-on-Hudson, there is a reason which will put all in a fair light. The explanation is that he has high standards of culture and personality. He knows only one person who measures up to them. If we can reach his point of view we shall see that these seemingly harsh judgments of his were not inspired by envious rancor

or chagrin, but by a sunny Olympian humor begotten of a simply unchallengeable superiority.

You see, it was this way: The Bigelows and the Poultneys between them had everything. They had noble blood, for there were English earls in the Poultney tree. They had wealth, social position, longevity, physical beauty, brains, wit, courage and honor. Of course, in a fraudulent democracy such as ours some branches of the family occasionally suffered impoverishment. Why? Because in any sort of financial contretemps it went without saying that *noblesse* obliged a Bigelow to sacrifice himself to his creditors—to the last penny. Blue blood tells.

But Poultney's father, John, whom most of us remember as a heavily whiskered patriarch, had been Minister to France from 1864 to 1867, had plenty of means out of "The Evening Post," was a gentleman and a scholar and had, as his son tells us, "a physical beauty and a charm of manner" irresistible to all women of taste. He was not merely wealthy, well-placed and handsome. He was also a romantic and perfect lover. A dozen New York heiresses gaped for him. He turned his back upon them and let them sob, while he married a scion of the ancient Poultney stock, who brought him no dowry but beauty, thrift and wit. She queened it over his drawing-room, putting New York plutocrats down and discouraging bores by various clever ruses.

To all these superiorities and to this talent for putting other people down Poultney Bigelow, born in 1855, was heir. He did not have to work or grab or climb for them. Like a true aristocrat, he was born with the silver spoon in his mouth. All doors opened to him, even in his

childhood. Hawthorne touched him. Dickens read to him. Pope Pius IX laid two fingers of blessing on him. In Paris he had his father's secretary, John Hay, for a playfellow. His father conferred with Renan, Taine and Thiers, but at eleven Poultney thinks he knew more about Parisian life than his father did. Thus he acquired that mastery of French which all through life enabled him to shame our ambassadors in all foreign capitals.

In 1867, the Bigelows returned to their new country seat a mile from West Point. One of the boys was enrolled in the Academy, and the twelve-year-old Poultney, if we believe him, at once became a general favorite among the cadets and was admitted to pretty much all the privileges of West Point. In this fashion he laid the foundations of that military insight which gave him during the Spanish War such superiority over the Colonel of the Rough Riders.

After a brief boarding-school experience in Providence, not very profitable, the Bigelows migrated to Germany. This was in 1870. For the next two years our author conveys the impression that when he wasn't polishing his French and his politics by consorting with the French prisoners of war he was learning to speak Greek and Latin by conversing with German professors, or he was knocking beer mugs with Mommsen or Von Bunsen, or else he was playing Indians and eating rice pudding with the little Hohenzollern children. "From the hour of my first visit until our departure for New York in the fall of 1872 I was an almost constant playmate of the future Kaiser."

These years in the nursery of kings made America

seem raw to Poultney. But his father was determined to make an upstanding, two-fisted American man of him, with none of the Harvard nonsense in him. Accordingly in the fall of 1873 he was entered at Yale. In that seat of manly piety and learning he quickly acquired the rudiments of hazing, fighting, the banger rush, boating, secret societies and the other instruments of education then popular in our best institutions. Under the excessive stimulation of the Yale atmosphere his eyes and digestion gave out by the time he was twenty, and he meditated suicide—in a momentary and unique fit of inferiority, of which I wish Mr. Bigelow had seen fit to give us a more plausible account. He passes it over with a word, presumably as an uncharacteristic and therefore negligible moment.

His father took him out of college and sent him on a cruise around the world. As soon as he was removed from the rough Yale crowd his spirits rose with a bound. On shipboard, a sailing vessel with only two passengers, he was, as Marie Bashkirtseff would have said, "the life of the party." He organizes a banjo-orchestra among the crew. He assists the captain and masters navigation. He becomes doctor, chaplain and undertaker till the boat is wrecked off the coast of Japan. He is rescued, however, taken to a good club, dried out and introduced to the diplomatic service and the bagnios of Japan and China. He meets the leading Orientals and becomes strongly pro-Japanese.

After a two years' absence he returns to Yale with the superiority befitting a Bigelow and an experience much wider than that of the average sophomore. The undergraduate doors open. He is made chairman of "The

Yale Courant." He captains his four. He serves as secretary of the Dunham rowing club. He shouts for Tilden. He adores Mary Anderson and the Governor of Connecticut's daughter. He graduates, like a gentleman, near the bottom of the list, but as class historian and chairman of the Ivy Committee.

Already Mr. Bigelow had been the hero of many feats of strength and daring. He had kicked higher than any one else—which a gentleman ought to do, if he is going to kick at all. He had tossed a German bully over his hip and thrown him on his back in a wrestling match. Single-handed, in his freshman year, he had stood off and cowed three hazing sophomores. He had won some boat races. Solitary, he had paddled his canoe among Papuan cannibals, dickered with them for their "plenty-god" and returned to his ship with the ten-foot carven log balanced across his bows.

Later he was to be the first man to take a canoe through the Iron Gates of the Danube. He circumnavigated Antigua in a sailing canoe, was capsized and stood off the sharks—which nipped at his paddle—by leaping from side to side of the boat. And while we are at it, we may as well admit that he was a skilful boxer, powerful wrestler, excellent marksman, masterful horseman, fearless swimmer, had some skill with the pencil, played various musical instruments and had a strong bass voice. Women smiled at him in all parts of the world. They went further than that.

When his alma mater "banged" the door upon him in 1879 it seems as if all doors of opportunity should have opened to him. But in this "cold commercial world," as he calls it, his accomplishments got a cold commercial

rating. The best that he could get was $5 a week in a grain commission house controlled by a friend of his father's. He chucked that job and enrolled in the Columbia Law School. He might have enjoyed the lectures of Theodore Dwight, but, unhappily, there was an obtrusive, pertinacious fellow student in the class, son of seven generations of Dutchmen, "remarkable by their mercantile push"—Theodore Roosevelt. He persisted in interrupting and haranguing the professor, and thus started in Bigelow an irritation which developed into vehement detestation.

He was admitted to the bar in 1882, occupied an expensive office for a little while, just earning his rent, and then, in 1885, turned his energy to the more congenial task of founding and editing "Outing," the first American magazine of amateur sport. They counted on help from the gentlemen sportsmen of America—and very confidently on Roosevelt. He sent them "half a dozen very short and very slovenly articles on ranching and shooting in the Far West"—together with a bill for $100 apiece, "nor would he accept a penny less."

It was discouraging to the editor of "Outing" to discover what a nation of "Jews" he had fallen among. Soon, he says, the magazine passed "into the hands of a German Jew, who made money by exhausting his credit." Meanwhile, however, a classmate of his, and a fellow student of art at Yale, turned up in the "Outing" office with a portfolio of cowboy sketches—Frederic Remington, drunken, blasphemous and ribald from a sojourn in the West. He and Remington struck up an alliance, and presently were off together, on a commission from "Harper's Magazine," to do a series of articles

on the French military posts in the North African colonies. On this adventure and a later one in Russia there are several pages of highly colored stories, in which Remington cuts a somewhat Rabelaisian figure, and Bigelow, as usual, an intrepid one.

Having thus got our author launched as a special correspondent, I abandon all attempt to pursue him through the crowding splendors of his subsequent career. From now on we are to think of him as, shall we say, a super-journalist? No, that is a title hardly suggestive of his elevated daily walk. He is, let us say, rather a free lance international observer of high class clubs, embassies, courts, colonies, armies, navies, and, on the side, a confidential adviser of kaisers, kings, princes and miscellaneous royalties.

Early in the '90's, for example, he was strongly urging his old playmate, William II, to make war on Russia. He had given a lot of study to it, and presented the war to his religious-minded chum as a moral duty. Besides, as he took pains to point out, a war would add a good slice of territory on the eastern boundary of the empire. Having just made a run up into Russia, he knew, of course, vastly more about military conditions in that country than did the Kaiser's chagrined bureaucratic experts.

William II was tremendously impressed by him, as one can readily recognize by his sending a special train to conduct our countryman to Potsdam, and also by his friendly habit of eating simple "bourgeois" lunches with him, hardly any one else present but the wife, that is, the Kaiserin, at whom he shouted across the table in the most unaffected manner in the world.

As a return for these tokens of affection Mr. Bigelow gave the War Lord his own famous canoe, Caribee. Rather reluctantly also, since the Kaiser fancied it, he relinquished to his royal friend a picture of Queen Louise which had been prepared for our fellow countryman by the Queen of Hanover, in consequence of a desire expressed to her while they were chatting over her cigarettes. Sharply though they differed on certain points—protectionism, for example—Mr. Bigelow and William II remained chummy till 1896, when our countryman dropped his friend with a dull thud, to indicate his displeasure at the Kaiser's famous telegram of sympathy to President Kruger. Doubtless this had its effect, for, as is well known, the Kaiser left Kruger in the lurch.

Mr. Bigelow was, of course, in South Africa, in time to size up the Boers. In fact, he rambled into a shack and drank coffee with Oom Paul and the Cabinet. President Kruger, of course, was overjoyed to see him and in his uncouth country fashion was cordiality itself. But our countryman required only a glance at their boots, a whiff of their South African tobacco and the buzz of their unintelligible Bœotian Dutch to recognize that they were outside the pale, yokelry, impossible—like Abe Lincoln, Grant, the African-Americans and the Jews. Mr. Bigelow left Africa with a clear conception that the White Man must take up his burden, and that the White Man in that part of the world was British.

When we became worried about Cuba, James Gordon Bennett sent Mr. Bigelow to Spain to ascertain whether there was going to be war. Mr. Bigelow reported to his chief that there would be no war unless Mr. McKinley

made it. When war broke out our countryman, of course, bent every effort toward getting to the front in uniform, so he says; but, unlike his classmate, T. R., having no political pull, he was thwarted. He had to go merely as representative of "The London Times." Consequently his intrepidity was engaged not in a clash with Spaniards, but in a thunderous encounter over the lunch table with T. R.'s chief of correspondents, Richard Harding Davis.

Needless to say, that Chocolate Soldier stuck to the parade ground with his sombrero, pistols and medals, while the dauntless Bigelow forged to the front and reported the battle of Cabañas. Except for his triumph over Davis our author has little to say about the Spanish War, except that the regulars did all the real work; that the Rough Riders were merely a sort of insubordinate brass band manipulated for publicity and for political purposes; that T. R. never rode up San Juan Hill; that he was a shameless and pertinacious self-seeker, regarded as a nuisance by all good West Pointers.

I shall not review Mr. Bigelow's muckraking in the Canal Zone, nor his anti-Hun campaign during the World War. I have sufficiently illustrated the wide range of his antipathies—Roosevelt, Wilson, Carnegie, the Vanderbilts, the Astors, the Rockefellers, Henry Ford, R. H. Davis, Harold Frederic, Booker Washington, Bryce, Jews, Irish, Negroes, Christian missionaries, the Monroe Doctrine, pacifism, feminism, vivisection, vaccination, prohibition, birth control, tobacco, liquor, meat and all American consuls and ministers. He admires, on the other hand, the following: The English, the Japanese, the Chinese as laborers, the old-fashioned

German maid-of-all-work, pretty women in their place, Tilden, free trade, John Burroughs, the Queen of Hanover, William II before 1896, Edward VII, the Duke of Cumberland, the Princess Murat, Sir Mortimer Durand, Philippe Bunau-Varilla, the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, Lord Roberts, Kipling, "Colonel" R. M. Thompson, the present Prince of Wales, and perhaps half a dozen others.

And yet here is Mr. Bigelow at seventy, with twenty or twenty-five years of active life before him and nothing much to do in this ungrateful Republic but to chop kindling wood and dose horses with Canadian whisky at Malden-on-Hudson. I think he proves beyond a doubt that this is a pretty empty country for a man of his Nordic tastes and with his definition of a "white man." With such poor democratic satisfactions as we have he seems emotionally out of touch. But he has written a story about his own superiority to everything in sight which will amuse thousands.

DEAN BRIGGS: THE BEAUTIFUL DEAN FROM THE LIFE

In spite of heavy opposition, I have always managed to find something attractive about the Puritans. Just now it is their descendants. I am indebted to Mr. Brown for informing me that Dean Briggs came into Harvard College, so to speak, straight from Plymouth Rock. That is to say, he descends in a straight line from John and Priscilla Alden, flanked on the one side by the presidential Adamses and on the other by William Cullen Bryant. His mother, it now appears, was a great favorite of Ralph Waldo Emerson's. His father was a liberal minister, a Unitarian, an abolitionist, an abstainer and a pacifist with sword in hand. That lucid and bland old Puritan, George Herbert Palmer, was one of his teachers at Harvard, and George Herbert and John Donne remained two of his favorite poets.

But it is neither because he is a Puritan nor because he looks like John Barrymore—he does not—that I call him "the beautiful Dean." His beauty is of Lincoln's type. Mr. Brown, and I in his wake, sketch in Plymouth Rock for the contrast it affords. We wish to say that the Dean struck the rock of Puritanism and the "milk of human kindness" gushed forth. We wish to say that from under the shadow of that rock there emerged a lean, angular figure with thin sandy hair, humorous blue eyes full of shooting stars, innumerable finely etched

crow's-feet, and an eager, youthful voice, of whom, before he retired in 1925, it had become customary in Cambridge and among Harvard men throughout the United States to say such things as these: that he was "the most romantic figure in higher education," "the Abraham Lincoln of the university world," "the greatest teacher in America," "the living patron saint of American college men," and "the finest example of American civilization."

Every university has a head, and usually a great number of heads co-operating and quarreling more or less amicably together for the production of "an intellectual atmosphere"—and other things. But not every institution of higher learning has a definitely localizable heart, adequate to the needs of the organism. Harvard, being an extra large university, required an extra large and active heart in order not to feel cold at its intellectual extremities. Providence acting through Charles William Eliot, thirty-five years ago intrusted a modest young English teacher—who could never be trusted to get safely across a rug with a teacup—to act as the heart of the university, to serve in Wordsworth's phrase, as "the very pulse of the machine." He served.

He served with radiant energy, with warm wisdom and humanity, with a quite extraordinary completeness of dedication. Your ordinary climbing young instructor protests against "prostituting" himself to "routine." Dean Briggs transformed routine with personality and went through incalculable quantities of it. The entire record indicates that he accepted his successive and then concurrent functions as teacher of English, Dean of Harvard College, President of Radcliffe and reformer of

athletics saying to himself in one form or another: "I came not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me."

He must have derived some strange surplus power from carrying on the will of the most ancient institution in the land, for he drove himself long and hard, yet in his incessant multifarious contacts with exacting and distracting people, virtue streamed from him in the gusto of his voice, the courteous gaiety of his salutation, the charity of his judgment, the clarity of his sense, the fineness of his honor, the practical reality of his helpfulness.

"It is not a small matter," says his biographer truly, "to become a powerful influence among the alumni of a twentieth century university." He remarks further that "the living men of Harvard number about 50,000—more than Napoleon had at either the Pyramids or Marengo." As for the quality and importance of the 50,000, he rather inexcusably neglects to quote the famous exclamation made by one of them: "What does a man need of 'Who's Who in America' when he has the Harvard Quinquennial Catalogue?" But the nature of Dean Briggs' influence among the 50,000 is admirably presented by Mr. Brown, who apparently wrote because he had to—because, like numberless other men whom the Dean's rare qualities have touched, he could no longer refrain from paying tribute.

It is impossible to write truthfully of the man without eulogy. Even his eccentricities and foibles were aspects of his goodness.

With Mr. Brown jogging our affectionate remembrance, we recall him in a dozen familiar postures: bid-

ding us good-bye at the door of his office in University hall, telling us one more story, while he wreathes himself about the doorpost like a grapevine and reaches with one hand for the ceiling. Half recumbent on his desk, his chin in the palm of his hand, beamingly asking a difficult young poet whose versification he has praised: "But, Mr. Jones, don't you sometimes wonder a bit what it all means?" Mysteriously involving his own long legs so intricately with the legs of the chair in which he is sitting that one instinctively springs forward to help him out of it. His plunging up and down the stairs in Sever three steps at a time in the old sandy red overcoat, with the green bag over his shoulder. The time that he came in radiant after a fall from his horse, his face covered with patches, legs and arms stiff with bruises, dumped out the contents of the old green bag, and gleefully began to read. Mr. Brown has a note of him trudging along a Cambridge street "with a box of cut flowers hanging loosely under one arm and the snowflakes piling themselves into the gaping collar of his brown greatcoat." And another of two young bloods in a street car watching him walk the length of the car to surrender his seat to a woman, while the two young bloods wonder together who "the gallant old gent" is.

Self-obliviousness was the note of his eccentricities, and his virtue as a teacher of composition began with that note.

In "English 12," and then in "English 5" (when A. S. Hill's shawl-wrapped gray little figure no longer crept out of the buggy to inculcate clearness, elegance, and force with tart little sarcasms)—in these advanced composition courses, Dean Briggs met a group of thirty

young fellows, most of whom probably thought they were geniuses. He gave them extremely little theory and no lectures. His scrupulous reading and careful red-inked criticism of every submitted piece of work—short theme, essay, argument, or novel on the installment plan—were largely concerned with the "suppression of faults," with pedantry, redundancy, fustian, obscurity. The only prescribed reading that I recall was a liberal dose of Dryden's prose. His own taste appeared to be what is called "pure," meaning eighteenth century. But he imposed nothing on his class but a light touch of the spur, a nudge, a slight touch on the rein. He gave them their heads and let them gallop.

They were all bent on learning to write. He showed them the few little tricks of good writing which he believed could be taught. More important than that, he turned the class into a capital "public," alert, humorous, discriminating, quick to applaud a good point, fearless to condemn a bad one. As for himself he was the chief auditor, the moderator and the high court of praise. In my own time there were men in the class who contributed with some regularity to the better magazines; but I think the majority of them would have thought an A from him a finer distinction than a check from "The Century." When we pleased him we felt that we could quote the great Sophoclean line: "I know I please the souls I ought to please."

Mr. Brown fills half a page with the names of writers whose style was formed under Dean Briggs. It is a curious group, ranging from Alan Seeger and Robert Benchley to Conrad Aiken and John Dos Passos. Some of them doubtless have been faithful only as Dowson

was faithful to Cynara—in their fashion. Yet there was something unforgettable in the *obiter dicta* of that classroom. A generation has gone by since the Dean wrote "falsely robust" against the phrase "the dugs of sensualism," used by a boy who was attempting to express his feeling about the gargoyles of Notre Dame. It is twenty-two years since I walked by the high brick wall into Harvard Square with the writer of that theme, discussing his phrase, and yet to this day I cannot employ any one of the more "brutal" Anglo-Saxon words without pausing at least for a moment to consider whether it is not "falsely robust."

When you used a word or betrayed a feeling which the good Dean thought excessively raw, there was never any austerity in his reproach, no high-strained seriousness. You were not made to feel like an ignoramus nor a reprobate. You got your correction with a benign twinkling of the blue eyes, and an especially complex and subtle wrinkling of the kind crow's-feet. If you were writing well the little red "Good!" hopped like a redbreast along the margin of your story. Mr. Brown has made a small garland from these marginalia. It has been computed, he says, that if they were all got together they would equal in bulk the works of H. G. Wells. Here is a group of somewhat astringent characters:

"This is as good as much that appears in 'Life' and 'Judge'; but it is not very good."

"Surely nobody's dialect is ever like this."

"Your story adds a new terror to co-education."

"You make the straight crooked; anybody can do that."

"Although this theme is short, it might well have been shorter."

The qualities which made Mr. Briggs a potent teacher he carried with him into the disciplinary duties of the Dean's office, into his presidency of the girls at Radcliffe, into his reformation of intercollegiate athletics. Mr. Brown will give you the details. I note only that in each of his functions he showed the self-obliviousness attributed to the saints, coupled with the most flexible, intelligent, quick witted, and quick hearted interest in every one who approached him. No matter how high his desk was piled, his mind was clear for concentrated attention on the case before him; so that every suppliant among the thousands of petitioners and proposers departed with a sense that he had been treated like a human being, that he had had a full hearing, that he had seen the wise face of justice, tempered with mercy and good sense.

Certain of his colleagues who fled from personal contact with students complained occasionally that the Dean was "soft." That must have been because he did even hard things kindly. He knew as well as any one that it is good for adolescent youths to encounter ever and anon the inflexible, the implacable. From time to time, incorrigible students, and their still more incorrigible and corrupt parents, encountered the implacable in him. Yet he administered even the sternest acts of discipline with such manifest fairness and courtesy that culprits often conceded that they deserved their punishment, and

an extant set of verses celebrates it as a pleasure and almost an honor to be dropped from college by Dean Briggs.

But his great success as an administrator seems to have been due to his evocation of worthy responses by his humanization of his office. In him one never felt the official. In him the Harvard corporation became a living soul. Touching him, men got a tone, got a tune, which they maintained all day—and long after. "Hello there! I'm glad to see you back. Sit down—at least for a minute." Immediately, and for as long as you were there, you and your interests were treated by him as if they were the central affairs in the universe—just as every man wants his own toothache treated.

Afterward, too, in chance encounters in the yard, in unexpected delightful little notes, perhaps years later, when you imagined yourself quite out of remembrance, you learned who was putting into effect the important principle which the Dean enunciated in a report of 1896. "The scholar of twenty," he remarked with some casual reflections on limelighting athletes, "can not and should not be a great public character; his fruition comes later, but he should never be suffered to doubt the watchful interest of the college that he serves."

It is a tremendous task to be the heart of a great university. In over forty years' service he took no sabbatical leave. Occasionally, when he was heavily snowed under, he put this notice on his door: "Dean Briggs will be grateful if no one tries to see him this afternoon before 5 o'clock." At five he would come out smiling from his labors, as if refreshed from a bath in the sea.

Dean Briggs is as distinctly a "character" as his colleague, Barrett Wendell, was, and Mr. Brown's presentment of him invites comparison with the notable biography of Wendell given to us in 1924 by Mr. M. A. De Wolfe Howe. To me at least Mr. Howe's book was a revelation; by the skilful use of diaries and letters he turned an academic mask inside out and showed us a hot, rebellious, indignant, partly foiled personality, who never completed his adjustment to his professorship, to Harvard, to New England traditions, to democracy, or to his own times.

Mr. Brown's book is rather a vivid record than a revelation. He had, comparatively speaking, no "inside information" about Dean Briggs. Was there any? Doubtless some of his older friends could if they desired tell us something more about his negligé utterances on birth, life, death, marriage, politics, religion—about the inner ferment out of which his public character emerged, singularly clear and firm. But I doubt whether any future biographer will ever be able to draw a curtain disclosing a secondary personality or a suppressed personality at war with the serene soul who served Harvard University. To all external observation he has seemed a happy spirit, free from rancor over the rusting of unused faculties. It seems the very essence of this case that the beautiful Dean early in life adjusted himself to his world, dedicated himself wholly to its service, and in the course of a long career made objective and effective his prime potentialities.

Whatever he let go, he let go heartily—one of the secrets of peace.

NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER: WHY ARE WE AGIN THE GOVERNMENT?

A UNIVERSITY president is the governor of a turbulent and critical commonwealth, and he is a terribly responsible person. He is responsible to his trustees, his faculty, the students, the parents, the alumni and to that august and minatory body known as the general public. He lives, like Milton, ever in his great taskmaster's eye, and the pressure on him to become a merely "representative" man, a composite of compromises, is immense. If he yields to it, he becomes *vox populi* reverberating in an empty barrel. President Butler has not yielded. His book comes from a philosophical center fortified by wide experience. It sounds real, it is tremendously interesting and of first rate importance.

In 1912 I suppose Mr. Butler, like Carlyle, thanked God when men called him a Tory, a Hamiltonian or a stand-pat Republican. In 1912 he was asking us rather sternly why we should change our form of government by the adoption of such steps toward a socialistic democracy as the initiative, referendum and recall of judges. His firmness in the matter created in many minds the impression that he was a stalwart illiberal; a conservative opposed to all change. They were mistaken. Since that time a number of phenomena, mondiall and national, have suggested to him reasons why we should alter considerably the temper in which we administer

our form of government, and even reasons for modifying, in certain respects, the constitutional frame of our government, or, more accurately speaking, the lean-tos recently added to the Constitution.

The phenomena which have apparently most profoundly influenced his political mood in the last decade are the late war and the German Empire in international action, the Soviet government of Russia, the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead act. But for the third of these influences Mr. Butler's reactions might have been limited to the customary denunciations of Prussianism and of Socialism. The Eighteenth Amendment was the device neither of Prussians nor of Socialists, yet it seems to Mr. Butler as damnably pernicious a piece of work as if it had emanated from the hands of atheistical Russian radicals, and not from the hands of his conservative fellow Christians. In order to condemn this measure as it deserves he is obliged to react more fundamentally. In his new book he reacts vigorously against what the French call *étatisme*, or the theory which appeals to State initiative for the institution of reforms.

Having suggested that Mr. Butler has changed the emphasis of his mind since 1912, one should add that he has altered very little the outlines of his political philosophy. By standing pat in 1912, he prepared the way to become a liberal of 1924; at both points he is an individualist, stoutly protesting against the tyranny of majorities, into the power of which the so-called progressive minds of the earlier period wished to commit us.

"The Faith of a Liberal" is composed of twenty-two essays and addresses delivered before all sorts of more or less learned bodies from the Academy of International

Law at The Hague to committees of the United States Senate. It discusses a wide range of the most important topics before us, in so far as we have social and political minds. It discusses international-mindedness, public opinion, the Constitution and several of its amendments, Socialism and capitalism, the discontent with democracy, a national budget, business and public policy, child labor legislation, prohibition, education and character building. Yet it is not a loose miscellany, but a real book with a thesis—the necessity for liberalism.

What is liberalism? In the title essay Mr. Butler answers that liberalism is an attitude of mind rather than a creed—an attitude of mind determined by "trust in the people tempered by prudence." Its historic basis is in the first ten amendments to the Constitution. It lays emphasis upon freedom of speech and the inviolability of the private life. It accepts the principle of collective bargaining and co-operation, both on the part of wage workers and of employers. It regards health, housing and education as matters of public interest in which the active co-operation of the government "may well be attempted." It objects to appeals to force in dealing with relations between men. It regards fixing prices by law and governmentally shackling commerce and industry as reactionary. It resists "the building up of a still more huge bureaucracy at Washington." It views the increase of public indebtedness with alarm. Though it is not anxious to go to jail for conscientious objections, it hates war with its whole soul. It never ceases to preach "the gospel of sound and generous education." To these principles may be added: Adhesion and support to the

International Court of Justice and the promotion of "the international mind."

The most significant sentence in the book is this: "In case of doubt the liberal would always prefer the field of liberty to that of government, and *he would withhold from government each and every power and function which can possibly be performed to the general advantage in the field of liberty.*" Mr. Butler is not in the least afraid of putting his theory to work. He shows us clearly how a liberal of his definition stands with reference to an education minister in the Cabinet and a Federal subsidy to aid (and control) education within the states; how a liberal with the interest of children at heart may oppose a constitutional amendment to prevent child labor, and how, in consistency with his leading principle, a liberal must explain the failure to enforce the national prohibition law: "The reason why it cannot be enforced is that it ought not to have been passed. In its attempted forcible interference with the food and drink and medicine of the people it is a form of oppression to which a free people will never submit in silence."

Mr. Butler reminds us that liberalism has fine historic associations, and he calls up the names of Milton and Hampden, of Franklin and Samuel Adams, of Jefferson and Lincoln, and of Gladstone and Morley. The list is suggestive when one recalls that in 1907 Mr. Butler's five foremost Americans were Washington, Hamilton, Marshall, Webster and Lincoln. He insists that liberalism was the dominating spirit of the American people from the Mayflower to the Emancipation Proclamation. He believes that it will come to its own again. He holds that the differences now between the Republican and Demo-

cratic parties are unreal and insignificant. All the best elements in both parties are liberal at heart. They should unite and emphasize the genuine and profound opposition between them and the Socialists.

I am neither a politician nor a political philosopher, both of which Mr. Butler is; but it strikes me that, despite his sounding the note as for a forlorn hope he has brought a great many popular elements into his liberal faith. Swatting the Socialists is always popular in America. Swatting the Eighteenth Amendment will appeal to our native aristocracy and to our foreign-born proletariat. Swatting the government at Washington and reviving the doctrine of states' rights will rally the intelligentsia in all the state universities—and all the Fundamentalists in the state legislatures! A free field and little or no competition and no government interference is all that any good business man asks. To hate war and *refrain from it,* and to settle international disputes in an international court is precisely what every one expects governments to do when they are civilized—if they are civilized.

I think one may go farther than that in pointing out the genuinely popular character of Mr. Butler's faith. At the present moment I have no doubt that there are multitudes of men in a mood to accept his fundamental principle of withholding from "government each and every power and function which can possibly be performed to the general advantage in the field of liberty." Just now *étatisme,* as well as liberalism, is in a shaky condition. Government stock is low in the heart of the people. The *laissez faire* doctrine once more begins to be spoken of respectfully. Mr. Butler himself, in his

"Building the American Nation," spoke last year with enthusiasm of Jefferson, remarking that his teachings were "less necessary during his lifetime than they are now." This year, in his new book, he speaks of Mill's "On Liberty" as "the precious little tract." In another passage he sends us to Thoreau's essay on "Civil Disobedience," a very intense little tract written by a man who held that the "government is best which governs not at all." Mill called himself a philosophic radical, and Thoreau was a practicing anarchist. Anarchy, not socialism, is the form which our political discontent tends to take to-day in minds familiar with the sources of Mr. Butler's individualism, and disliking, as he dislikes, the "tyranny" of Prussia, the "tyranny" of the Soviets and the "tyranny" of the United States of America.

Mr. Butler attributes the present wide popularity of lawlessness to our mania for law making and, above all, to the Eighteenth Amendment—the national abrogation of a custom which, within limits, he holds, with Dean Inge, is as harmless as eating roast beef and is as little the business of the government. To discuss the percentage of the population which lands in jail, the poorhouse, or the insane asylum from overeating roast beef would carry us beyond the bounds of this article. The lawlessness and the contempt for law directly traceable to the Eighteenth Amendment are doubtless impressive and they appear to be immense—like the lawlessness due to drink and intoxication which preceded the passage of the amendment. But I incline to believe that we overburden the Eighteenth Amendment with our present discontents.

Prohibition of liquor has just now the prominence of

an insult which has eclipsed an injury. Between 1914 and 1919 people everywhere began to think of governments as the thieves of all their pleasures and the causes of all their pains. The war itself gave *étatisme* at the same time a swelled head and a solar plexus blow from which it is still groggy. We are still sorely thinking of the state as the power which takes away our lives, our earnings, our freedom of action, our freedom of speech, and finally our little private pleasures and vices. We will give our lives, like sheep. We will even under stress surrender a good slice of our earnings, and only grumble. But for our little private pleasures and vices, we will make a hot fight. Do we really care so much for our gin and water as all this lawlessness comes to? I hope not. Do we even care so much for our abstract right to drink gin and water? Again I hope not. The ado which we are making over gin and water is ridiculous except as an expression of our sense that we have a tremendous grievance against the state. We have an enormous standing grievance against all the big, modern states. We are sick to despair, to the verge of a hopeless cynical despair, at a spectacle—well, let a sound, practical, optimistic liberal, like Mr. Butler, describe the spectacle:

All governments gravely profess their devotion to peace, but all feel that the time has not come to do anything about it. All governments express a pious wish to limit armaments, but while the ink is hardly dry on the formal acts of ratification of the findings of the Washington Conference, great fleets of airships are building and new and more deadly forms of poison gas are being devised. All governments record a wish for international

co-operation, but some always find that no plan yet proposed is in any wise practicable. All governments assert agreement as to the ends to be attained, but few will so far lose their dignity as to take the first step toward those ends.

There—not in our insatiable appetite for gin and water—there, in the proved impotence of governments to perform the constructive tasks which they ought to perform, and in the proved impotence of governments to refrain from doing the destructive things which they ought not to do, there is the ultimate explanation of our growing lawlessness, of our increasing irreverence toward national government. The American people will stand a lot of governmental pressure applied in behalf of reason, justice, order, health, science and general welfare—pressure applied against the natural selfishness and baser instincts of the average sensual man. There is a lot of diffused common sense among us, available for the support of sensible governors. But governmental opposition to the diffusion of scientific knowledge, vital and indispensable to the welfare and happiness of every family—for example, the knowledge and means requisite for the control of the size of one's family; government legislation to prevent instruction in the doctrine of evolution; governmental, or even social, prohibition of Sunday recreation and exercise, prohibition in accordance with a code devised to recuperate the energies of antique Hebrew warriors for the slaughter of the Canaanites in the morning—of that description are the measures of national and state governments which result in a general antipathy to government, measures

which will be a source of anarchy increasing steadily and exactly as the intelligence of the people increases.

Liberalism, therefore, would appear, at first sight, to be precisely the political prescription needed at this hour. Liberalism, as Mr. Butler defines it, means withholding from government "each and every power and function which can possibly be performed to the general advantage in the field of liberty." Why, then, in this day of cynicism and despair about the state, should not liberalism come with a rush into the popularity which it enjoyed seventy-five or a hundred years ago? "Why," as Mr. Butler asks, "is liberalism in eclipse"—both at home and abroad?

I do not know. I guess that the old-fashioned liberalism impresses many people as "reactionary," as a counsel of despair, as negative in its promises, desperately slow in its accomplishment, and inadequate to its problems. Mr. Butler, with the authority of Lord Acton, describes liberty as the highest political end, as an end in itself; and he asserts that one "who would subordinate liberty to any other aim or end is not a liberal." This has a metaphysical and eighteenth-century sound. It seems to bar Mill's "precious little tract" from the scriptures of liberalism, for Mill justifies liberty not as an abstract right and an ultimate end but as a means to happiness and individual development. As soon as *laissez faire* liberalism, or freedom to do as one likes, seems not to end in happiness but in starvation, unemployment and overpopulation, people look for a political ideal containing a more nutritious substance than freedom to do as one likes.

I guess the most formidable foes of liberalism to-day

are not the Socialists, but the crying necessities of modern states and the terrible interdependence of all the parts of modern society. I guess that the increase of population, intercommunication, the navigation of the air and the depths of the sea, the use of atmospheric electricity, the control of germ diseases, the chemical exploration of the soil and of food, the scientific study of heredity, environment, crime, sex, birth-control and a thousand other activities of man's inventive mind, are going progressively to multiply, in spite of all political theorists, the necessary and inevitable problems both of *mores* and of government, international, national, state and local.

I guess the time is coming when government will inevitably be more involved in our private welfare and our private happiness than it is now—so much involved that insuring our liberty will seem the least of its anxieties. The field of civil liberty, which political theorists love to talk about, no one has ever been able to define to any one else's satisfaction. Mill's "precious little tract" with its superficial appearance of logical coherence is a jumble of inconsistencies, and contains provisos and limitations of its central principle which would justify the most Prussian form of imperialism. The appearance of clean-cutting in Mr. Butler's own principle seems to me only an appearance. His principle is valuable in giving one a mood, but the liberal mood disposes one rather to postpone than to grapple with the practical problem. Speaking of the Eighteenth Amendment, he says very firmly that interference with their "food, drink and medicine" is an oppression which no free people will bear. But Mr. Butler, I fancy, will bear very

well governmental interference with his meat, his milk and his medicine while they are in the hands of the butcher, the milkman and the drug manufacturer.

Furthermore, we can't wait for butcher, milkman and drug manufacturer and such minorities to develop a sentiment in favor of inspection before we force inspection upon them. We demand the best guaranties obtainable by law the moment we learn how impurities and adulterations affect our health and happiness. At the present time, it might be remarked, there appears to be a crying need for a more careful, a more scientific inspection by government officials of the commodities which they are allowing bootleggers to dispense. Liberty is a slippery fish. By a curious paradox, what Mr. Butler himself really desires is not less but more governmental interference with the drink of our free people! As for food, the moment that it is scientifically ascertained that a certain diet will cause rickets in children it ought to become a matter of *mores* to avoid that diet; it ought to be considered a grave immorality to bring up children on that diet. Scientifically enlightened parents do not.

At present we don't consider it a crime to produce rickety children. A few million diseased children more or less don't matter much to us till occasion for a military draft arises. Our government is concerned at present with promoting numbers and fecundity. But when our government begins to think of the quality rather than the quantity of population, and when science has gone a little further with the study of diet, to persist in feeding one's family with certain kinds and combinations of food may easily be recognized as a criminal act, like serving them arsenic. Education suffices to safeguard

Mr. Butler's kitchen and mine. There are multitudes of kitchens which it doesn't enter. If, in this and innumerable similar cases, legislation and government activity can immensely accelerate the diffusion of scientific knowledge, I suspect we shall more and more dislike waiting fifty years for the news to spread, while we keep the hands of our metaphysical liberty clean. In numerous cases Mr. Butler's own liberalism recognizes that liberty must be subordinated to health and happiness, and I guess that subordination is destined to increase.

In my speculative moments what I should like to see is a scientific necessitarian party recruited from the better elements of the Republican and Democratic parties, and lined up, not against the American Socialists, who don't matter, but against the Fundamentalists, who do. Its campaign literature would rather put the soft pedal on liberty as a slogan of the mythological era; but it would speak much of science, of happiness and of the domain of necessity, natural and human, which is the field of the rational and scientific mind.

It might eventually be capable of popularizing a positive political theory better adapted to cope with the impending complexity of society in the future than the old *laissez faire* theory: a theory that every power and function which cannot possibly be performed in the field of liberty should be cheerfully granted to government. But this is of the remote future!

So long as governments, as we know them, remain in the Fundamentalist mind and spend the main part of their enormous power in preparing to fight Jehovah's

battles; so long as governments remain more wasteful, more quarrelsome, less scientific, less rational than nine out of ten men in the street, there is something appealing and, I hope, wholesome, in menacing our own with a vigorous revival of states' rights, local pride and stalwart individualism.

MIDDLE-CLASS STRATEGY OR A CALL TO THE CONVERTED

A VERY old man, filled with the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove—and with the immense patience which is the sometimes invisible soul of democratic institutions—rose at the conclusion of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, and in a speech of incomparable tact and sagacity expressed his wish that the bitter dissensions which had attended the framing of the great document might die in the chamber, and the Constitution be recommended to the world with the *unanimous* consent of the delegates. That was Benjamin Franklin. "Much of the strength and efficiency of any government in procuring and securing happiness to the people," said this sage conciliator, "depends on *opinion*, on the general opinion of the goodness of that government, as well as of the wisdom and integrity of its governors."

I surmise that a number of our older and graver heads have recently been pondering this great speech of Franklin's; I note, for instance, that it is included in the choice collection of political scriptures appended to President Butler's "Building the American Nation." We have reached a critical point in our national history, at which it seems to many observers of our political and social life imperative to restore to the people some confidence in the wisdom and integrity of their governors, some faith in the goodness of their government, and, one must

add, some decent intelligent and general *interest* in the minimum essentials of good government.

At the present moment, "opinion," on which the strength and efficiency of government so largely depends, opinion in great masses of the people shades from the political indifference and apathy of moderate democrats, who are pretty carelessly at ease in Zion, to the depressing cynicism and contempt of chronic croakers who are enjoying "the decay of capitalist civilization," "the failure of democracy," "the bankruptcy of political government," and "the downfall of western civilization." The coarse invective and reckless humor of our habitual partisan controversies have borne their inevitable fruits. Any one nowadays who presents the government at Washington as a cheap vaudeville show, any one who seeks to convey the impression that presidents, prime ministers, cabinets, and congressmen, here and everywhere, are a pack of fools and charlatans, is sure of what Mark Twain would have called "a very satisfactory hurrah."

Suppose one is surfeited with listening to men whose fundamental attitude toward government is essentially frivolous or essentially hopeless. Suppose one agrees with Emerson that when criticism and ridicule have reduced to humility the impudent knowingness of political saviors of all sorts, it will still be found by all intelligent men that "politics rests upon necessary foundations and cannot be treated with levity." What then should be done to improve the tone and quality of political opinion?

Professor Abbott,* of Harvard, gives the reply of a

* *The New Barbarians* by Wilbur C. Abbott. Boston, 1925.

thoughtful publicist of the economic middle class, in which I include those whose annual income is less than a million dollars. "The New Barbarians" is the first of a projected series of books designed to restore faith in the fundamental political soundness of the American Republic and to unite its friends and confound its enemies at home and abroad. At their various points of view like-minded historians, economists, sociologists and educators will accumulate reasons for believing that civilization started right in the United States, that it is still, in the main, on the right track and that it had better stay there. If one may judge by Professor Abbott's overture the series will be written by fairly even-tempered and resolutely hopeful men and will tend strongly toward a judicious conservatism, or perhaps one had better say now, toward an enlightened liberalism, using the word as Dr. Butler defines it.

In turning over recently the letters of Matthew Arnold I was much struck by a passage, written in 1864, in which he declares that the "stock vulgar liberalism" of the old stagers "will not satisfy even the middle class, whose wants it was originally modeled to meet, much longer." If liberalism is to prosper, he suggests, it will have to be raised from the level of routine political cant to the level of ideas and humane emotions. "This treatment of politics," he says, "with one's thought, or with one's imagination, or with one's soul, in place of the common treatment of them with one's Philistinism and with one's passions, is the only thing which can reconcile, it seems to me, any serious person to politics, with their inevitable wear, waste and sore trial to all that is best in one."

Professor Abbott is one of our liberals who recognize that "the old stock vulgar liberalism" of, say 1864, is not, in 1925, quite the thing to satisfy even the middle class much longer. He knows the futility of trying to hold the middle class political interest for long with a mere apology for things as they are. If liberalism is to regain our respect it must, like other forms of political faith, promise something—prove that it has a breath of creative spirit, that it has a "program" which can stand comparison with anything that the Webbs and Hyndmans and Trotzkys can put forth.

Professor Abbott labors at that problem.

In his first and most entertaining and stimulating chapter called "What Is the United States?" he bestirs his imagination to make it conceive of our country as a beautiful, a venerable, an intelligent and a purposeful being and to confound the impudence of those who insist on considering it a "young country" "without culture" and a mere "melting pot" for the latest importations of European junk. He characterizes the republic as "a great historical development of social, political, economic, intellectual and religious forces," with common laws, language and literature, with potent heroic legends, with a philosophy of its own and with a personality which is the outgrowth of three hundred years of American conditions. In most interesting detail he characterizes this American personality as marked by its love of liberty, opportunity, individualism, patriotism, democracy, honesty, cleanliness, sanitation, a passion for bathrooms, physical and moral prophylaxis, freedom for women, toleration, independence, gregariousness, no-

madism, energy, organization, "pep," system, efficiency and a cheerful sentimentalism.

I, for one, am convinced by this effort of Professor Abbott's synthetic imagination. I have seen millions of Americans like that. I do not consider the type flawlessly perfect, do not regard it as the ultimate and unalterable flower of human effort, toward which the rest of mankind will have to strive for ages to come. Yet I think it is a "bully" national type—as "bully" a national type as any now going. It pleases me, even now, beyond any other. It always will. And I am as ready as Professor Abbott to fling it in the face of any gipsy John who saunters in to tell us we haven't anything worth saving. To speak of nothing else, a nation that loves bath tubs as ours does must be dear to God, and, like Greece and Rome and Israel, have a distinctive function in human history. I hope our type will be preserved—and improved. And as I express that hope I feel my interest in all the processes which brought the type to the present state augmented and quickened.

In reply to those who assert that the bourgeoisie have no program, Professor Abbott bestirs his intelligence to prove that the "co-operative individualism" of the American liberals is the best formula yet devised for enabling a hundred million people to live amicably together. I think he is right. He points out that, springing from a vigorous social life, innumerable industrial, legislative and humanitarian experiments are now afoot in behalf of the common welfare. It is indubitable. He argues, with much force, that our American bourgeoisie, educated, energetic, progressive, ambitious and open at the top and at the bottom, bears no resemblance to a fixed,

closed order, but is the great fluid medium through which all powers and talents may find their proper level; it is the power which makes of the republic essentially a free aristocracy. That is the best thing we can say of the bourgeoisie.

The greater part of Professor Abbott's book, after the first chapter, is occupied with a patient examination and criticism of the various "subversive movements" and "purely destructive schools" which "under various guises seek to overthrow existing institutions by undermining confidence in them," or "find nothing good in the present situation and offer nothing to take its place."

Having read "The New Barbarians" twice, I feel bound to say that on both occasions I had some difficulty in getting through it. It is avowedly intended for "the average man," and it will settle and clarify his orthodoxy if he stays by it; but it will not enliven him as much as it should. It says, too infallibly, just what every "right thinking" man will expect it to say. My own difficulty, for example, in getting through it was due to my discovery that I was in full agreement with most of its major contentions long before I reached the end of the carefully elaborated arguments for them.

Because I am by instinct and conviction an individualist I am afraid that "The New Barbarians" is going to appeal pretty exclusively to readers whose fidelity to the faith is unquestioned and unshakable—to persons of about this description: white, middle class, native-born Americans, with seven or eight generations of ancestors of English and Scotch derivation in American cemeteries; brought up on the Bible and Henry

Wadsworth Longfellow; accustomed to vote with one of the two great parties; "neither rich nor poor," but accustomed to the possession of a little property, earnestly intending to keep what they have got, and, with the consent of heaven, to accumulate a little more before they die. The more stolid, hide-bound, smug and unimaginative members of this group are likely to read "The New Barbarians" with unmitigated satisfaction.

I am a strong believer in the American bourgeoisie and feel great pride in its virtues and in its achievements. I am pleased with all the fine and just things that Professor Abbott says about it. But I wish that he had called his book "Co-operative Individualism" or "Moderate Democracy," or by some other name which would emphasize the hope and faith of *the American people,* rather than by a title which emphasizes the more or less groundless suspicions and fears and the selfishness and jealousy of the more timorous part of the *middle class,* wincing under their taxes on the one hand, cursing under the exactions of the manual laborers on the other hand, and whining, in imitation of Dean Inge, their absurd apprehension that the middle class is in danger of being wiped out.

From the point of view, however, of immediate political advantage I admit that "The New Barbarians" is an effective title. *It challenges attention.* So does the identification of the barbarians with the Socialists, the anarchists, the Communists, "the nationalizationists," "the followers of Plumb and Townley and Towner," "the Progressives" and "the goodly company of humanitarians." So does the page or more of suggestions that

all these people are "insane." So does the attempt to associate free verse with the "subversive" political element—an incidental aspect of the characteristic academic abhorrence of all creative writers while they are alive—an abhorrence for which Harvard professors are pre-eminent. So does the constant attempt to fuse the entire group of American political "progressives" and free thinkers with the Russian Bolshevists. So does the suggestion that the five million Americans who voted last fall their miscellaneous protests against the corruption, and extravagance of the "two great parties" constitute a menace to our civilization more dangerous than Attila. So, finally, does the intimation flaunted on the jacket of the book that the "subversive" and "revolutionary" elements in our society are foreigners "hardly one generation removed from European serfdom."

As a champion of our bourgeoisie, which both he and I love like brothers, Professor Abbott must have read two years ago, as I did, Mr. John Corbin's somewhat like-minded panegyric on the hope of our democracy, called "The Return of the Middle Class." On page 60 of that book Mr. Corbin says:

In point of fact, alien propagandists have been relatively few and, except in the incitement of sporadic violence, impotent. As for the great masses of immigrants, they have been too ignorant, too hard working, too much bent on the week's wage, to give thought to revolution. Even in the steel strike, which was mainly a strike of "new" immigrants, the revolutionary element was numerically small. But the organizing leaders, Fitzpatrick and Foster, were Ameri-

cans. So everywhere the radical element which is dangerous consists of Americans born and bred. The most radical organization in the country, the Industrial Workers of the World, are, according to John Spargo, "virile, red-blooded Americans, racy of our soil and history." In "The Casual Laborer" Professor Carleton H. Parker presents statistics showing that about one-half of even the lowest stratum of discontent and revolution are native Americans. The great revolutionary leaders are, without exception, either native American or thoroughly Americanized.

I do not see what is to be gained by regularly introducing into our political discussions all this hocus pocus about Russian Bolshevism. Professor Abbott's long list of bugaboos leaves me absolutely cold. I do not see what is to be gained by attempting to conceal from the intelligent reader that the greatest leader of the "forces of revolution"—as liberals now define revolution—the greatest and most inspiring leader during the last generation was Theodore Roosevelt, magnifying in every possible way the powers of the national government and in the latter part of his career seeking in every possible way to strengthen the power of the "masses" against the courts, the machines and "the privileged classes." Neither do I see what is to be gained by attempting to conceal from the intelligent reader that the potent element in our population against which the "liberals" are now attempting to solidify is largely composed of ancient American country clergymen, ancient American temperance workers, ancient American Fundamentalists, ancient American idealists, ancient American club

women, together with a horde of young inexperienced women voters who are not yet convinced of the impossibility of progress through politics. Liberalism is in reaction against its own child, which has gone a little too far and a little too fast.

My chief criticism of Professor Abbott's book is this: It should not have been written *against* the so-called "third party," but *to* its members. It should have attempted to show the *intelligentsia* who joined the absurdity of their working for exactly what they most detest—standardization, leveling down, mediocrity, the tyranny of numbers. It should have attempted to conciliate the proletariat by proving how easily every member of it may rise to be a motion picture actress or president of a baseball league. We are living still, thank God, in a country where even the humblest Secretary of State may rise to a position of great power and influence, and, for example, become a leader in the religious life of the nation. All paths are still open. The way to create a self-conscious and angry proletariat is to wind one arm around "big business" and the other around "little business" and the professions, and then, in consciousness of overwhelming superiority, to call all the honest manual workers, together with the free verse writers, who are trying as hard as they can for a footing in the bourgeoisie—to call these people foreigners, barbarians, subversives and revolutionaries.

In the present state of public opinion, including the third party, the obvious opportunity of the liberal publicist is to address the erring children gently, fraternally, with at least a modicum of Franklin's tact and humor,

and move that all now return to the fold by "unanimous consent."

Besides, it is just conceivable that the liberals may some day recover from the deep prostration of their success and may themselves desire again to undertake "something constructive."

MR. DREISER IN TRAGIC REALISM

WHAT is comedy?

A selection of truths about the follies of 1925.

What is tragedy?

The whole truth about the follies of 1925. That is the subject of this book.

Many of the younger novelists in these whirling days speak of Theodore Dreiser reverently, yet retrospectively —much as free verse writers ten years ago used to speak of Whitman. Youngsters who think to shelve him with the retiring title of "the grand old man of realism" reckon without his large, stolid, literary ambition, which, to my mind, is his most salient and admirable moral characteristic. As a novelist he has been silent these ten years. Yes, but with a brooding and pregnant silence! In silence and isolation he has been industriously harvesting, like some old bear of the mountains cleaning up a great thicket of blackberries. And now with his familiar huge plantigrade tread he comes lumbering down the trail with a massive 800-page American tragedy which makes the performances of most of his rivals and successors look like capering accomplishments of rabbits and squirrels.

I shall not quarrel with any one who contends that "An American Tragedy" is the worst written great novel in the world. There are few forms of bad writing which it does not copiously illustrate. Every horror which the

schoolmarm teaches the fourth-grade pupil to avoid the "Father of Modern American Realism" riots in: "illy-dressed," "eventuate," "demeaned," in the sense of degraded; "enthused," "different to," "emasculate structure" of an anemic young girl, "via marriage," "via her determination," "the mentating section of her brain," an "ideational lake," scraps of all technical jargons, all varieties of journalese, French tags, queer coinages, and long wallflower words of Greek and Latin origin, serving purely decorative purposes.

Nor are these the most serious defects of Mr. Dreiser's style. There are chapters in which he is slower and more difficult than Proust. In dialogue and exciting narrative passages he often achieves simplicity and fair speed. But the moment he begins to "psychologize" he flounders in a morass of parenthetical and concessive clauses, slovenly beyond belief with repetitions, and infuriatingly clogged with "connective tissue"—"At the same time," "Also that despite," "And although, because of it," "And although, according to," "And in spite of the fact that"—till one is ready to yell with the torture of it.

And yet a most impressive novel. One has to take it seriously, if one takes it at all. Somehow—astonishing to relate—I feel as if this book had been very expressly left on my critical doorstep. I am not at liberty to think that Mr. Dreiser wrote it to please me. But in more than one way it does please and encourage me. It cheers me especially by demonstrating that a novelist need not stop growing at forty-four and work thenceforward on the formula which he adopted at thirty. Mr. Dreiser is taller and broader than when he wrote "The

'Genius.' " This new book marks a long stride toward a genuine and adequate realism. In order to indicate clearly the direction of his development I must briefly review his position up to 1915.

From "Sister Carrie," 1900, to "The 'Genius,' " 1915, Mr. Dreiser wrote fiction from outside American society, looking in. There were both advantages and disadvantages in that position. At his point of view, he was almost completely insensible to the force and validity of multitudinous complex powers which constantly operate within the social structure. He was incapable of understanding, for example, that etiquette has as much tensile strength as Bessemer steel. In compensation, he was able to observe the operation of other large powers of which the insiders are often unconscious, as they are of the diurnal and annual movements of the earth. He began his literary career with an overwhelming impression of what the sun, the moon, gravitation and a Cave Man ancestry were doing to him and to the captive animals inside the flimsy cage called civilization. The intensity of his vision of natural forces blotted out, for him, or reduced to insignificance, human efforts to introduce art and design among the gigantic conflicts of nature.

Born in a Mid-Western German Catholic family, Mr. Dreiser had accepted, he tells us, till he was well on in his adolescence a conventional account of society and a religious picture of the universe. Then came awakening experience with numerous girls of a sort, with numerous newspapers of a sort, politicians of a sort, captains of industry of a sort, and one thing and another—including browsing in Haeckel, Darwin, Spencer, etc. In

consequence of this experience, with which he was quite unequipped to deal critically, he rushed with journalistic speed and violence to the conclusion there was nothing solid or real in this religious, legal and conventional account of the world and the societies of men. From end to end it was a romantic fiction, such as he himself was accustomed to fabricate by way of a news story for unscrupulous editors. Or it was merely a dull sham, maintained by hypocrites with smug faces and starched shirtfronts.

The real world, he concluded, after considerable introspection and reportorial looking in at the windows of several cities—the real world was composed of money-hungry and sex-hungry males and females, who, so far as the heat of their blood supported them, seized what they wanted and ran off with it, or rushed upon one another in carnal rages under the impulse of forces which they were helpless to resist—the devil taking the hindmost.

The only laws which enforced themselves in this real world were biological, physical and chemical. Accordingly, these became the only laws which commanded his respect. Whoever conformed or attempted to conform to a religious or moral "code" he was inclined to rate as a coward, a fool, or a "ragbag moralistic ass." He embraced "realism"; it offered an escape from the inferiority of a class subjugated by its morality. The successful, enviable, admirable denizens of the real world, he opined, were the Cowperwoods and the Witlas—as long as their luck lasted. The truly "virtuous," he held, were those whom nature had made strong and ruthless in the eternal struggle for the fierce pleasures

and the unconscious biological ends of the animal creation.

Ten years ago, in an article subsequently included in "On Contemporary Literature," I carefully examined Mr. Dreiser's work up to and including "The 'Genius.' " It appeared to me then that he was the outstanding representative in American fiction of a point of view which I then considered, and still consider, tragic, disastrous. It was easy to show that the informing spirit of his work was naturalism rawly conceived—the crude "jungle" philosophy which I have just outlined. I thought the logical issue of such philosophy was tragedy—such tragedy as the nations of Europe were then staging in the name of "realistic" politics. It struck me that this philosophy was nowhere near so realistic as its advocates tried to make it out. It seemed to me inadequate—inadequate as a guide to civilized conduct, inadequate as an explanation of the behavior of men and women when they were civil. I suggested that a more adequate designation for it would be "barbaric naturalism."

There was, I say, no difficulty in showing the pervasive presence of it in Mr. Dreiser's novels. Up to that time he had not attempted to imitate the artful and deceptive "objectivity" and "impersonality" of the Flaubertian technique. He was a propagandist in the open, and very much bent on letting his readers know what he was driving at. His novels were elaborate documentations of a preconceived thesis. He was not pursuing truth but browbeating it into the service of a crude theory. His naïve naturalism shaped his plot and colored his characterization. But it also protruded defiantly above the surface of his narratives. It was ex-

plicit in little dissertations which a reader blind to its presence elsewhere could not fail to plump against.

In the decade since "The 'Genius,' " Mr. Dreiser has been observing, meditating and revising his views of American society, the nature of reality and the nature of realistic fiction. He has put forth several plays, two books of observation—"A Hoosier Holiday" and "The Color of a Great City"—a collection of moral ruminations in "Hey Rub-A-Dub-Dub" and a highly illuminating autobiographical work, "A Book About Myself," 1922.

This piece of autobiography is as valuable to the student of Mr. Dreiser as "A Story Teller's Story" is to the student of Mr. Anderson. It substantiates the impression which one receives from the novels. It lays before us the elementary psychological stuff out of which Mr. Dreiser has molded his heroes and his heroines as well. Comparison of the autobiography with the fiction indicates, I think, that this author has little power of penetrating antipathetic types. He specializes in the primary instincts. But he understands himself pretty well and he constructs his men and women out of parcels of himself.

In his years as a newspaper reporter, between 1890 and 1894, he developed, if we may believe him, from an unlicked bear cub, an untrained, inexperienced, formless and hungry youth, into an impecunious Don Juan, sentimental, inflammable, vain and greedy for the luxuries which insulted his poverty—in the street, in the hotel lobby, in the ornate barroom; the flash of studs and stickpins, the rustle of silk, the shine of patent leather shoes, the distinction of tailor-made coats, the

glitter of glass and the rich harmony of potted palms and mahogany.

In "An American Tragedy" Mr. Dreiser presents the life history of much such another youth—a youth, however, who never got past the passion for girls and stickpins to the larger and more engrossing passion for understanding how he came to be what he was, and why he did what he did.

I think this story must have originated in the "tragedy" itself. I conceive that Mr. Dreiser began with the tragic fact and worked backward, with no thesis whatever, with no ulterior purpose beyond the complete uncovering of all the intricate network of causes which led to the event.

Mr. Dreiser has either renounced or effectually suppressed the naïve naturalism of his previous novels. There are no interspersed philosophical dissertations here. There is no special pleading, no coloring of the news, no studied continuous aspersion of the customs and habits of men in civil or religious societies from the untenable point of view of "barbaric naturalism."

No; Mr. Dreiser has changed both his method and his point of view. He has withdrawn to a position of far more complete artistic "detachment." He gives me now for the first time an impression of "impersonality," "objectivity," "impartiality." He appears to me now for the first time in his fiction to be seeking sincerely and pretty successfully to tell the truth, all the relevant truth and nothing but the truth—and with such proportion and emphasis that every interest involved shall feel itself adequately represented.

Clyde Griffiths is the "hero." He is the son of itinerant

evangelists who sing and march and pray in the streets of Kansas City. Clyde is ashamed of his parents, of their piety, and their poverty, and of the dreariness of life in the Bethel Independent Mission where they dwell. They have exchanged animality for hymn books and a spirituality so thin that it is a dubious bargain. Christian nurture has not sunk in. Enviously he looks upon the advantages enjoyed by unconsecrated society: "Oh, the fine clothes, the handsome homes, the watches, rings, pins, that some boys sported; the dandies many youths of his years already were! Some parents of boys of his years actually gave them cars of their own to ride in. They were to be seen upon the principal streets of Kansas City flitting to and fro like flies. And pretty girls with them. And he had nothing. And he never had had."

Clyde gets a job, first as a soda fountain clerk in a drug store, and then as a bellboy in the Green-Davison Hotel. The first book of this novel, running to 148 pages, might be called "A Bellboy's Romance"; and there Mr. Dreiser skirts one of the great possibilities of fiction: the corruption of the lower classes by the upper classes. Clyde is a selfish, vain, greedy little beast, and quickly learns to lie to his mother about his wages, to dress with some "elegance," to drink, to feast and to play with girls of about his sort. His sister "gets into trouble." His mother comes to him for pecuniary help. He wants his money to buy his girl a fur coat. But, becoming involved in a serious and disgraceful automobile accident, he evades all his problems by running away from them. The whelp is selfish and a coward to the marrow of his bones.

After an interim of wandering and of rehabilitation as a bellboy in the Union League Club of Chicago Clyde makes a fresh start in the cotton mills of a prosperous uncle in Lycurgus, New York. Here his ignorant amorousness soon gets him deeply involved with a hitherto respectable girl employed in his department. If you will compare Mr. Dreiser's romantic glozing of Jennie Gerhardt's predicament with his exhaustive and astoundingly intelligent study of the shame and misery and torment of Roberta Alden in being pregnant, penniless, without a husband, and dependent on a resourceless sneak, you will readily recognize that Mr. Dreiser's ability to see all the elements in a situation has grown enormously since he published that earlier sentimental tale.

While surreptitiously carrying on this affair Clyde's snobbishness and his lust for luxurious living lead to an attachment in the "higher circles" of Lycurgus society. Mr. Dreiser's women generally have no individuality beyond their physique, their softness, and their clothes. If he has met with a feminine intelligence, he has made no boast of the encounter. This girl of the upper circles, Sondra, has impressed me mainly, as she did Clyde, by a tailored suit which followed her form exactly and which was enhanced by a small dark leather hat, pulled fetchingly low over her eyes. In addition, there was a leather "belt" of the same color around her neck. Note also that by a leather leash she led a French bull. To Clyde, "youth and beauty in such a station as this represented the ultimate triumph of the female." I have forgotten to mention that in her more tender moments

this leather-panoplied creature called her lover "Clydie Mydie," and so on.

Well, Clyde has $25 a week and a girl who is about to become a mother; and he is attempting to maintain social relations with the sons and daughters of the mill owners. *That* in a sense is his tragedy, and Mr. Dreiser most impressively lays it bare. But out of Clyde's economic and moral predicament a death results, for which he is held criminally responsible, though perhaps he is technically innocent, yet not without murderous malice aforethought.

There is a pretty situation for dramatic treatment. Mr. Dreiser makes the most of it. His exhibition of the antecedent and attendant circumstances is complete and convincing. So is his analysis of the psychology of Clyde and the working girl. It is of a masterly exhaustiveness. The reader is put in possession of everything relevant. Then through the greater part of the second volume we attend a long drawn-out trial, in the course of which we hear everything that public opinion and the law can say for and against Clyde. Then we get the verdict of the boy's mother and of his latest sweetheart and of the court of appeals and of the Governor of the state and of a sympathetic, intelligent and conscientious clergyman, and finally of Clyde himself. The law, the gospel, and the individual conscience all have a fair hearing. For Mr. Dreiser, sternly detached, lets every fact and opinion speak for itself.

I have not the slightest intention of offending the author by suggesting that he has become a sound moralist. I imagine that is quite unintentional. All that he has sought is comprehensive veracity. But only this

morning I assured a young woman that if she would read Mr. Dreiser's latest novel it would permanently deter her from folly. I showed her the book. "Yes," she replied with an appraising glance at the two volumes, "but by that time it would be too late."

In its larger features the construction of "An American Tragedy" is as solid as a bank building. It is very long, to be sure, but there is little in it which is not functional, not a part of Mr. Dreiser's ponderous design. I was very nervous for fear the roof would fall during a couple of sagging chapters early in the second volume; but, no, he slowly swung his heavy timbers into place, restored his tension and maintained it to the end. The structure of a novel he has mastered. It is the structure of the sentence which remains a mystery to him. Often he plunges into a sentence head foremost, "trusting to God Almighty to get him out of it"; and is vouchsafed no divine aid. And yet the work as a whole is massively impressive. I do not know where else in American fiction one can find the situation here presented dealt with so fearlessly, so intelligently, so exhaustively, so veraciously, and *therefore* with such unexceptionable moral effect.

MARK SULLIVAN ON THE DAYS OF OUR YOUTH

Do you like to remember your own life? Are you, by happy chance, between forty and fifty years old? Was it your good fortune to enter upon your period of full adult consciousness at the beginning of this present century? If so, come hither and take front seats for a most extraordinary evocation of the American years from 1900 to 1904. Or if you are grandparents, file into the next row and here you will learn as you never knew before what was passing through the minds of your children when they were in their early twenties. Or, if you are of the younger generation, here you may learn what your parents were up to when they were the younger generation.

It may be gathered that Mark Sullivan's book has delighted me from the title to the last line on page 602. The mood of it is, to my fancy, present in that singularly inviting title, "Our Times"—the possessive plural suggesting so much loyalty, so much affection, so much social and fraternal feeling, so keen a sense of the common lot. That is Mark Sullivan's note. I find in his history evidence of that same deep, whole-hearted commitment to his own time and place and circumstances for better or for worse, which I recently commented upon in Sandburg's "Lincoln," and which stirs us so profoundly in all our unmistakably American men—in Roosevelt, in Wilson, in Henry Ford, Mark Twain,

Carnegie, Whitman, Emerson, Jackson, Jefferson, Franklin.

Once I used to envy old men who had seen civilization winding westward in the covered wagons over the lonely prairies to the coast. Once I heard an old man—eighty or thereabouts—make an eloquent farewell speech, only a year or two before he wrapped the mantle of his couch about him, as Bryant bade, and lay down to pleasant dreams. He rose and, extending his long arm toward his audience of young people, opened his hand and said: "This hand has shaken the hand of John Quincy Adams. I have seen . . ." Gazing over the heads of three generations, with his dim eyes scanning far-off horizons he recited the nation-transforming events which moved in shadowy pageant across his consciousness. Then he said, with a magnificent accent of conviction—straightening himself, filling his lungs, and throwing all the force of his eighty years into the adjective—he said: "I—have had—a *majestic* life!"

Since I have read Mark Sullivan's book I envy old men no more. I, too, have had a majestic life; and this historian of the average man, with his amazing powers of evocation, has made me richly aware of it. Oh doubtless, like my coevals, I have been gradually ripening for the perception of it. I have grown aware that boys and girls not existing when I was in college are already producing other boys and girls. I have known what it is in exchanging reminiscences with my friends to pull myself up short and exclaim: "O, yes, that happened before you were born." Latterly a long tract of time—a quarter of a century, no less—has been detaching itself from my biting consciousness of present life. I grow

aware that for all these new boys and girls of whose advent I hear every day, that quarter of a century can never be anything but history. In curious sympathy with them, as I look backward, these twenty-five years become to me also historical, picturesque, glamorous, remote, painless, exciting me hardly more than a tale of Arthur's wars or a passion in a theater. At this distance I can't bother to distinguish sharply the personal proprietorship in the experience which befell "our people" between 1900 and 1925. Whatever happened to anyone happened to me. So it seems now. My imagination takes possession of it all, as one can possess spiritual property, without crowding anyone else out. It is my past, it is your past, it is our times.

The dawn of the century—how this historical chanticleer summons it out of the shadows! We are in college again. We are wakened by workmen in the street, some on the sidewalks, some on bicycles, going to their work at 7 in the morning. They get $1.25 a day, but they are whistling and singing, for they can buy a suit of clothes for $8, whisky may be had for $2 a gallon, and no one takes Carrie Nation very seriously. We lie abed listening to the songs: "There'll be a hot time in the old town to-night," "Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer true," "You can't holler down our rain barrel."

We light the gas, strop our razor, shave, thrust out our Richard Harding Davis chin over our high stiff collar and don our woolen suit with the square, heavily padded shoulders. Our college room rather pleases us. We have two or three Gibson girls, magnificently pompadoured and corseted and high-chinned, such as we shall waltz and two-step with at the prom in June; we

have a sketch of the old Southern darkey by Kemble; A. B. Frost's pictorial anticipations of Robert Frost; some of Remington's Indians, and a bit of color by Maxfield Parrish. Our book-case contains a few texts, some poetry and a lot of new novels: "David Harum," "Richard Carvel," "When Knighthood Was in Flower," "The Reign of Law," "Barrack Room Ballads," "Paolo and Francesca," "Songs from Vagabondia," also George Ade's "Fables in Slang," Mr. Dooley, Roosevelt's "Rough Riders," "The Cynic's Handbook," a file of "The Lark" and Elbert Hubbard's "Philistine."

For breakfast, bananas and cream, a dish of oatmeal, two eggs, and, as it is a holiday, pancakes. What's in the newspaper? Hay has established the open door in China. . . . Mr. McKinley explains to a convention of Boers that he is "neutral." . . . Judge Taft is going to set up a civil government in the Philippines. . . . Admiral Dewey has announced that, thinking it over, the Presidential office doesn't seem so difficult and, if his countrymen insist upon it, he will undertake the job, promising loyally to obey the orders of Congress. . . . Mr. Bryan and Senator Hoar are attacking "imperialism." . . . The Republicans are going to have a sound-money parade. . . . Hum, hum. What else?

The Carnegie Steel Company has been incorporated with the "enormous capitalization of $160,000,000," and New York University has got $100,000 for a "Hall of Fame." . . . Walter Reed's commission has gone to Cuba to look into yellow fever. . . . Richard Hovey and Stephen Crane have died. . . . So has Maud S.—she ran in 2:08¾. . . . Olga Nethersole has been arrested for producing "Sappho" in New York, and "The

Evening Post" says that the play is "a reeking compost of filth and folly that the crude and frivolous Mr. Clyde Fitch has dug out of it [M. Daudet's book]." . . . Never mind: to-night we will go and see Viola Allen in "The Palace of the King," or Forbes-Robertson in "The Light That Failed," or Edith Wynne Matthison in "Everyman," or E. H. Sothern in "If I Were King."

Meanwhile, how about a game of ping-pong with that "queen" of our acquaintance who is just home from Smith with a most fascinating sequence of shirt-waists? It might lead to a drive in the afternoon along some country road, where one isn't in danger of being run into the fence by one of those infernal automobiles. In the evening, perhaps she and her mother would like to see Ethel Barrymore in "Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines." And who can tell what may come out of it?

Mark Sullivan can tell what came out of it in the next twenty-five years. By copious illustrations, maps, graphs, statistical tables, and some preliminary chapters which are condensed encyclopedias of change, he demonstrates that there came out of it for the average man a majestical life—a life crowded with miraculous fulfilments of prophecy, realizations of Arabian dreams and Utopian aspirations, the forward rushing of an entire people into unsurmised wealth of unprecedented experience. We average men, he tells us, were the principal spectators; we regulated the performance; we managed the spotlight; we were the authors; indeed, we were, in our phrase, "pretty near the whole show." And what haven't we seen!

The population of the United States increasing from 76,000,000 to 116,000,000, and its character now regu-

lated by restrictive and selective immigration laws. The enlargement of our national possessions by lands in Central America, the Gulf of Mexico and the Far East. Three wars: with Spain, in the Philippines, the World War. Cities of a hundred thousand springing up on vacated Indian territory. 20,000 miles of concrete roads where were ten, and 17,000,000 automobiles where were 8,000 at the dawn of the century. Electricity expanding from an intermittent spark to a continuous river in which we move and have our being—with subways, submarines, automobiles, telephones, toasters, X-ray, airplanes and radios accessible to everybody.

The rise and fall of three great political leaders, Bryan, Roosevelt and Wilson. Profound modifications of national government in the income tax, the enfranchisement of women and the prohibition amendment. The Hague Tribunal. The world court. The League of Nations. The Pure Food act. The conquest of malaria, yellow fever, typhoid, diphtheria, syphilis, infantile and puerperal diseases, and the partial subjugation of tuberculosis. The discovery of radioactive elements, atomic structure, relativity.

The appearance of new women with votes, bobbed hair, short skirts, silk stockings, cigarettes, amours, opinions and jobs. At the beginning of our period we smoked but two billions of cigarettes in the course of a year; now we are smoking forty-three billions of them. At the outset we had but one pair of silk stockings to 2,000 of us; in 1921 there was a pair for every six of us. Such things we have seen. Into the bargain has been thrown, in this quarter century, an increase of the workingman's leisure, recognition of his unions and an in-

crease of the average man's life from forty-nine to fifty-five years.

Such is the stuff of Mark Sullivan's history. To his mind nothing is too great or too small for a place in the record. He possesses, with astonishing completeness, "the goods." A newspaper man, editor, Washington correspondent, old resident of New York and Washington, frequenter of political conventions, personal acquaintance of notables of all sorts, he has been an eye-witness of much that he records, he has collected a vast deal of his material at the source, and his footnotes are filled with references not to books but to his personal contacts with the characters and events in his narrative.

Such is the stuff, but on what principles does Mr. Sullivan organize it? What is the center of his interest? I find some indications that he staggered a little under the task of organizing it. But obviously he has given much thought not merely to phenomena but also to the explanation of phenomena. He has searched for "God's blueprint," antecedent to the launching of our quarter century. He has studied theories of history, and here and there through his narrative he traces his conception of what history should be to the precepts and practice of Macaulay, Buckle, McMaster, George Bernard Shaw and Mr. Dooley—the last, by the way, being one of the few men of our generation of whom Theodore Roosevelt stood somewhat in awe.

He follows Macaulay and McMaster in announcing that he will treat "the history of the people as well as the history of government," and he goes beyond both of them in the concreteness and detail of his history of the people. Like Buckle, he is disposed to seek the explana-

tion of phenomena not in "great men" but in the prevailing "forces" of the age, upon which he sees the political leaders riding like bubbles on a river. He quotes Louis Napoleon, Bryan and G. B. Shaw against undue veneration for heroes, citing from the preface of "Saint Joan" a passage to the effect that this world is "finally governed by forces expressing themselves in religions and laws which make epochs rather than by vulgarly ambitious individuals who make rows." Finally in a footnote he quotes from Mr. Dooley this passage which I think admirably indicates the reader whose historical hunger Mr. Sullivan's book is primarily designed to appease:

I know histhry isn't thrue, Hinnissy, because it ain't like what I see evry day in Halsted Street. If any wan comes along with a histhry iv Greece or Rome that'll show me th' people fightin', gettin' dhrunk, makin' love, gettin' married, owin' the groceryman an' bein' without hard coal, I'll believe they was a Greece or Rome, but not befure. . . . Th' other kind iv histhry is a postmortem examination. It tells ye what a counthry died iv. But I'd like to know what it lived iv.

Mark Sullivan thinks he knows what our times "lived iv"—what brought real satisfaction to the average man. It wasn't, he is sure, the Wilson tariff bill nor flowery representatives from Missouri asking God to prosper it, and promising Congress that its passage would "mark the dawn of a brighter day, with more of sunshine, more of the songs of birds, more of that sweetest music, the laughter of children." It wasn't even any one of our three peerless political leaders, Bryan, Roosevelt and Wilson. All three of these men, he points out, different

as they were and mutually hostile, were brought forward by one and the same movement—by a widespread popular movement of discontent, a movement of average men looking for some one with a silver tongue or an amulet or a big stick who would help them to take measures against something which they rather blindly felt was "gouging" them.

What was the Something at which Free Silver, Trust-Busting, and the New Freedom were hurled? It was a complex of causes: the end of free land, the immense increase in population, the reduction of currency by one-half since the Civil War, the increase of Verbotens, following the law that "the amount of regulation the individual must endure is in direct relation to density of population multiplied by velocity of its units."

"Bryan and his bi-metallic fallacies were defeated by McKinley and Roosevelt and clear thinking about sound money," says the orthodox political historian. "They were not," says Mr. Sullivan, in effect. Bryan's ambitions were thwarted by two obscure fellows named McArthur and Forrest, who invented the cyanide process of extracting gold from low-grade ore, in consequence of which gold production, which had declined from $129,614,000 in 1866 to $118,000,000 in 1890, rose thereafter by steady annual increments to $286,879,700 in 1898. "Although Bryan," says Mr. Sullivan, "probably never heard of these two mining engineers, it was they who frustrated his political career."

There is one out of many possible illustrations of the fashion in which Mark Sullivan "philosophizes" his history of our times. So far as he can manage it, he brings down the politicians from their seats and exalts men

who, in the pages of James Ford Rhodes, are of relatively low degree, if not conspicuous by their absence. In "the larger history" of our period the true heroes, he holds, were the men of pure and applied science, the inventors, the captains of industry, and the creative artists. Edison, Steinmetz, Pupin, Burbank, Langley, Curtiss, the Wrights, Henry Ford and a long list of car manufacturers; Carnegie, Harriman, Rockefeller, Goethals, Osler, Walter Reed, Gorgas; the novelists, playwrights, musicians and painters—such are the men who have made our times rich and spacious. "The currents that flowed from the activities of scientists were the real history. Compared to the scientists and the inventors, the politicians were merely what H. G. Wells says the ancient kings and dynasties were—bubbles that bobbed along upon the surface merely 'showing the swirl beneath!' "

It is no easy task to write a chronicle as democratic as that which Mark Sullivan has undertaken. There is no perfectly satisfactory model for it yet in existence. It blows up the old Roman road and scatters the "dignity" of history to the four winds of heaven. Its ideas are subversive. They are as little inclined to march in order as the Russian army was after officers were elective and saluting optional. The multitudinous facts surge in all directions at once. The historian is obliged to invent new modes of grouping them; he has to discover new links of concatenation among his groups, and sometimes he can't find the links. Mr. Sullivan's "architecture" is as mysterious to me as that of "Processional" or "Manhattan Transfer"; the form of this first volume strikes me as experimental. I see the detail distinctly,

but not the design. Except for the index, which might well have been fuller than it is, I should not know where to turn for the discussion of the dime novel, or for the four pages on "changing styles in dogs," or for the discussion of the Yellow Kid, or for four notable pages of theses such as these:

That the discovery of the remedy for diabetes may have done more for human happiness than the entire thirty-one years of Henry Cabot Lodge in the Senate.

That the acquisition of the Philippine Islands may have been of less real consequence to the average American than the increase in the effectiveness and abundance of fly-paper and window-screens.

That the perfecting of the vacuum cleaner and the electric flat-iron may have meant as much to the average woman as the bringing of woman suffrage.

That the popular novels, from "David Harum" and "Eben Holden" in 1900 to "Main Street" and "Alice Adams" in the 1920's were as interesting to as many people and as important in their influence on popular thought as the same number of congressmen. . . .

[That there were] more Americans who took their political guidance from the philosophy of Mr. Dooley and the cartoons of Homer Davenport, of John McCutcheon, or Jay Darling, than from the more didactic political teachings of Champ Clark.

The theses which I have just quoted are uttered in a sort of "aside" as we roar along on the Mississippi torrent of facts. For the most part Mr. Sullivan does not argue; he merely presents facts, copiously, lucidly, with grand gusto. I happen to know nothing of his political convictions. I do not find a particle of venom or even

of partisanship in his book. By a kind of indirection, nevertheless, he gives what "Gentleman Jim" Corbett would call a solar-plexus blow to the idea of political grandeur. He reduces the entire governmental show to insignificance in comparison with the multifarious interests which really came home to the heart and hearth of the average man in our time, augmenting his satisfactions, widening his imagination. For the average man it is an enormously vivifying and encouraging point of view. It flatters the plain people. But as I am one of them I look forward eagerly to Mr. Sullivan's further enriching our life by enabling us to remember the next twenty years of it.

THOMAS BEER: OUR OWN PETRONIUS AT LAST

THOMAS BEER enchants me by his air of an elderly and rather sweet-hearted Petronius revisiting the American Nineties with a gardenia in his buttonhole, toying with a gold image of Trilby's foot on his watch fob, sipping white Burgundy at Martin's with young Clyde Fitch, and attending the opening night of "The Prisoner of Zenda" at the Lyceum. And such gossip as he gives us between the acts!

His sophistication, to my poor sense, seems the real thing—fathomless, yet suave, serene, unemphatic, communicated in a smooth conversational flow. His acquaintance with unpublished letters and the oral tradition of the period seems, at any rate, comparable with that of Brander Matthews, whose lore is as widespreading as the Charlemagne cycle, and who can veraciously say of the literary wars of the Mauve Decade "quorum pars magna fui—my own sword was in the midst of them," while in 1895 this astonishing Thomas Beer, God bless us, was but six years old! Like Stephen Crane who, in the mid-Nineties, was writing the first poignantly realistic impression of the Civil War, which was over before he was born. Thomas Beer is a realist not by direct observation, but by virtue of the reincarnative imagination.

Why imagination lights up the past for him like noonday has not been adequately explained, perhaps cannot

be. They tell us that this saturated New York cosmopolitan residing at Yonkers was born in Council Bluffs, Iowa, in 1889; but that hardly clarifies the matter. They tell us that he was educated at Yale and at the Columbia Law School and that he worked in his father's law office and served as lieutenant of artillery in France; but that experience does not sharply individualize him. And so we turn to the printed record.

Beside short stories in the magazines, he has published four books: "The Fair Rewards," 1922; "Stephen Crane, A Study in American Letters," 1923; "Sandoval," 1924, and "The Mauve Decade," 1926. The last is a performance so consummate in its kind that one is tempted to regard the first three as preliminary studies leading up to it, though this procedure is unfair to their intrinsic interest.

"The Fair Rewards" is a novel about theatrical people in the second half of the Nineties. For reasons connected with the author's birth, it was obviously an exercise in the historical imagination. Yet, in the character of the hero, Mark Walling, already Thomas Beer's special type of consciousness announces itself. Mark makes his appearance as a naïve youth of good provincial upbringing, quick perceptions, and a peculiar sweetness of which he is unconscious. Like Warrington in "Pendennis," he is seized in his tempting adolescence by a common creature of the theater, married by her, and soon deserted. All his human tenderness thenceforth is turned toward a nephew and a niece whom he adopts —with only "fair rewards," with rewards, indeed, rather heartbreaking.

Yet for him there is another reward springing some-

how out of his early disillusion and his detachment; the æsthetic sense of the spectator of life is immensely intensified in him. Knowing himself to be a man who "must not fall in love," he disciplines himself to reduce all life to drama, scene and costume. In England, feeling his emotions becoming too deeply engaged by a charming novelist who has undertaken to acquaint him with the "world," he saves himself, like one of Henry James's æsthetes, by his pictorial sense. He abstracts the form, the color, the stately motion of the woman and adores with a cool rapture. I present one passage in which the erotic emotion is in transition toward the pure æsthetic:

She strolled out of the drawing room, and Mark could see her passing up the long stairs. She moved splendidly against the white panels. One wrist caressed the rails. The black gown dragged gently up the rosy treads. She vanished slowly into the dark, and Mark said "Golly!" as he went to get his hat. He wandered over to the bar of the Black Swan and drank cold ale while he meditated.

A little further on Mark Walling is drinking tea in an English garden. Again like a hero of Henry James or Edith Wharton, he dramatizes himself. He sees the garden "composing" itself into a stage setting, himself bowing and murmuring "in the manner of Mrs. Lemoyne," leaning on the limes "in the manner of Herbert Kelcey," and drinking his tea "in the manner of Mr. Drew."

I do not recall whether the reviewers in 1922 charged Mr. Beer with being a disciple of Henry James. If they

did that is probably one reason why in the next year he published "Stephen Crane." In Crane, a relatively obscure figure of the Nineties, he found the artistic detachment and the æsthetic consciousness which made James the æsthetic pontiff of the period. But he found in Crane other qualities not possessed by James, yet essential to a pioneer of the realism of 1923.

To this short-lived boy with his visual sense of unprecedented acuteness and his penetrating imagination, life had infinitely more sweetness, brutality, perfume, color and pang than the Jameses and Whartons and Howellses were allowed by the Gilders and Aldens and Howellses to tell the world. He had not been ruined by English drawing rooms, or barren theories of good form, or the tremors of the consolidated virginity of New England. He was no emasculate hierophant elaborating euphemisms before the high altar of decorum. In the slums of the Bowery he had been baptized into "the new honesty," which doesn't say "throat" when it means "breasts," or "*fille de joie*" when it means "whore." He was a drummer boy of the realistic revolt. His mind, as Mr. Beers says, "had stripped itself of all respect for those prevalent theories which have cursed the national fiction."

With the details of Crane's life history Mr. Beer was not primarily concerned. The primary purpose of this brilliant little study was to destroy the æsthetic system of the Nineties and, incidentally, to celebrate the removal from little boys of the insufferable burden of behaving like Little Lord Fauntleroy: and from young girls the task of looking like the Gibson, Christy and

Gilbert pictures; and from young men a hopeless competition with "Rupert of Hentzau" and "Soldiers of Fortune." The attack impresses me on the whole as devastating. It is not for the most part a frontal attack. Mr. Beer destroys the Nineties merely by vividly representing them from a new point of view, just as at a recent alumni reunion a class at Bryn Mawr wilfully rendered themselves curious and ridiculous by parading in their graduation gowns of twenty years ago.

An attractive aspect of his treatment is his humane feeling toward the period and toward the many figures in it which he characterizes. Mr. Beer does not crudely travesty, pillory and petrify the outmoded heroes of those days. He presents them living, moving, changing. Howells, for example, whom iconoclasts of less amenity have in recent years trampled roughly upon, Mr. Beer exhibits as insensibly moving toward æsthetic "breadth" under new influences after his migration from Boston to New York. The Howells, he reports, who had scolded Mark Twain for writing "she combed me to hell," received some lessons in the artistic value of visceral sensation. He ——

had been lightly bidden to sit still and talk while St. Gaudens finished the model of a quite naked woman who went on chewing gum as though she were fully clad. He was standing beside Stanford White on the deck of a ferry when some stoker fell from the stern of a tug and was smashed by its screw to pulp that left on the waters a lacquer of bloody oil. The architect yelled, "Oh, poor devil!" and then brought down both palms on the rail of the ferry with another cry: "My God! What color!"

That observed "lacquer of bloody oil," so horrible to one sense, so beautiful to another—you can't drop that out of literature to spare the feelings of people who dislike unpleasant things, not if you are really bent *à la recherche du temps perdu.* That splash of bright blood in the picture is what makes Howells and Stanford White come alive; and that was one of the points Stephen Crane made for the fiction writers when he "brutally" insisted that after the orderly sergeant was shot through the cheeks, "his jaw hung far down, disclosing in the wide cavern of his mouth a pulsing mass of blood and teeth."

"Sandoval," Mr. Beer's second novel, associates itself on my mental shelf with Mr. Hergesheimer's "Java Head" and "The Bright Shawl." It is a rather mordant tale of moral disillusion about the society of New York and Dobbs Ferry in the decade following the Civil War. Its force as narrative is not great. It is somewhat excessively "talky." Yet it impressively conjures up the period of Ward McAllister's domination—its speech, its social tone, its scenes, costumes, characters, the reek of its brandy and roses, and the naked bodies and passions beneath the rustle of silk and the crackling of starched linen.

Everything that Thomas Beer has touched hitherto has turned to literature. That interests me. I wonder why that is. In the midst of our immense "literary production," the secret of extracting the gold from our plentiful ore is rare. It is to be understood that I use literature here in the restricted sense which Mary Colum —an acute and exacting critic—gives to it in the April "Scribner's" when she tells us that "literature is determined by the conflict of significant mind with significant

material." In the field of American letters, she finds few minds at work which are "significant" in her sense. But she continues hopefully, "Although there are relatively few who can use it, America at the present day almost certainly supplies significant material."

Yes, America at the present day supplies abundance of significant material; but when hasn't it done that? The other day I was describing the train load of rich material which Mark Sullivan had just run up on to the siding in the first big volume of his encyclopedic social history of the last quarter century, "Our Times." In that book there are significant materials for everybody—for poets, playwrights, artists, essayists, historians, sociologists and moralists. God's plenty of unspoiled material ready to hand. Mr. Beer's book no more competes with Mark Sullivan's trainload of materials than a bunch of violets competes with the forty-acre wood lot on which they were picked or than Whitman's "Drum Taps" competes with the War Office records of the Rebellion.

Mr. Beer must be an enormously diligent student of his period, 1890-1900. He must have read volumes, studied scores of pictures, rummaged the files of old journals, for many a page and paragraph of his book. His writing steadily implies knowledge extensive, detailed, intimate. But here is no outpoured cornucopia. The materials are completely transmuted by the æsthetic consciousness. This narrative moves as to the sound of flutes and recorders. It is an harmonious and musical composition. It is an arrangement of brilliant pictures as brightly suggestive as a Japanese screen.

As we have never had such writing in America before, I must find space for a specimen or two. Mr. Beer

backs his mauve decade against the end of the New England era, around the grave of Ralph Waldo Emerson, for which Miss Alcott made a lyre of yellow jonquils and "somehow steered Bronson Alcott through the dreary business until he stood beside the coffin in the damp cemetery and mechanically drawled out the lines of a dire poem." After some notable pages on the transcendentalist's idealism and the practical daughter's self-sacrificial life, we come to this conclusion:

She had nothing left for herself. Her sister's sons were grown. Her will was made, asking that she be buried across the feet of her family, as she always had cared for them in life and would rest better so. On March 3 some acute infant may have noted that the lady wore no furs. Chill wind pursued the carriage as she drove away. In the morning came the daze and agony of a new pain. She asked: "Is it not meningitis?" But at noon she could not know that Bronson Alcott had stopped talking, and before a second sunset duty's child went hurrying after him.

My feeling at present is that I'd rather have written that last sentence than the "Cambridge History of American Literature."

For my second specimen, scores of passages critically characterizing literary and artistic movements and personages clamor for exhibition. I should like to produce the characterizations of Bierce, Peck, Sumner, Gilder, Alden, Frank Norris, R. H. Davis, or retell some of the intimate stories about the editorial propriety of the period, or discuss Mr. Beer's treatment of what the

orators called "our pure and enlightened womanhood," the Irish, and the American magazines. But as indication of the range of this æsthetic appreciation of the American nineties, perhaps we had better have a bit of his account of the last fight of the Dalton boys—a celebrated gang of bandits, who, on the morning of October 5, 1892, rode into Coffeyville, Kansas:

Presently Broadwell rode wildly down the street, with his hands gripped on the horn of his great Mexican saddle, and fell dead from his mount a little way from the noisy town. Somebody killed Bill Powers. Grattan Dalton ran down the sidewalk with blood on his face and paused to rip the green handkerchief from his throat in full range of the batteries before he turned at the corner of a stable and fired back, killing the city's marshal with a superb shot from the hip. His shoulder was riddled so that he couldn't lift his rifle.

"A superb shot," killing the city's marshal? But what was it that the Prince said when his enemy Hotspur fell? "Superb" is the adjective found by a chronicler who sees the affair in its momentary interest as a drama of valor and responds as a "spectatorial angel" to the high point of the spectacle. We are not discussing criminology. We are painting desperate valor in action.

The note of the new æstheticism is here. The Journal of the Parisian Gemini, the Goncourt brothers, exhibits some of the qualities which distinguish Mr. Beer. George Moore, writing about Paris in "Confessions of a Young Man" and about the Irish literary renaissance of the nineties in "Hail and Farewell" was engaged upon

a similar task in a comparable mood. Lytton Strachey or Aldous Huxley would not surprise us if at any time they should come out with a history of the yellow nineties or the Edwardian era conceived as an ironic revery and illustrated by Max Beerbohm. But in America, to tell the plain truth, I had not imagined that there was any one capable of writing "The Mauve Decade."

This little volume of 268 pages takes the period in which Harrison, Cleveland and McKinley presided above Mr. Dooley's cash register, and it curiously bears on its title page this epigraph: "Mr. Whistler said: 'Mauve? Mauve is just pink trying to be purple.'" The decade has been strained through a temperament and stained by it. The chosen materials have been assorted, dyed and interwoven like the vari-colored stuff of a Persian tapestry.

I can give no notion of the fascination of the treatment by calling "The Mauve Decade" the most delicious piece of literary history produced on this side of the Atlantic. For among us there is almost nothing with which it can be compared. Literary history is here taken out of the hands of the embalmers. It is wakened from the academic anesthesia. It is quickened into an art as personal, as colorful, as seductive as poetry. It becomes the medium through which a fastidious personality of singular amenity and pungency dramatizes his tastes and distastes. It is the expression of an original æstheticism, the complex flower of a modern consciousness, detached, subtle, sensitive, refined, discriminating, yet rich, vital, vivid.

Is it true? Is it adequate? If it is a question of his-

torical comprehensiveness and the verdict of eternity, the answer must be: "Why, no; of course not." But if it is a question of artistic truth and adequacy, the answer must be: "Yes, it is true enough, adequate enough to be fully alive."

RING LARDNER: HARD-BOILED AMERICANS

THE Americans, like the Romans, are a serious people. In general they do not know how to play. But as they possess great organizing talent and plenty of money they are able to employ highly trained performers to play for them. In order to increase the mental "kick" which they experience in witnessing a perfected spectacle, they lay a small bet on the outcome of their games. They also seek out clever writers and commission them to follow the national sports and to make much of them in the newspapers for the sake of those who are studying the subject seriously and broadly. Ring Lardner began in that way.

Like most of our humorists, he is a midwesterner, whose comic sense has been rendered acute by migration eastward. In the present disintegration of religion and morals it is only by comparing the *mores* of the small town with those of the big town that a modern writer acquires abiding standards. Born in Niles, Mich., in 1885, Ring Lardner received his literary initiation in South Bend, Ind., where he reported for "The Times" and studied the American language in the impressionable period from his twentieth to his twenty-second years. His provincial apprenticeship was brief. From 1907 to 1911 he was sporting writer and editor in Chicago, St. Louis and Boston, and then again in Chicago till 1919, when he became a writer for the Bell Syndicate, and moved to Great Neck, L. I.

Years ago I understood that he was the pre-eminent writer on sport in my part of the country. I regularly bought the Chicago paper to which he was then contributing. But as I did not at that time appreciate the full seriousness of sport, I never turned over as far as the sporting page. And so before I adequately sensed what was going on, this young "busher," expert observer of diamonds and gridirons, was author of half a dozen volumes of *belles lettres;* and critics of some discretion were declaring him the heir of Mr. Dooley and placing him in the front rank of American short-story writers.

According to my custom, I made haste to acquire and read all his books that are carried by his present publishers, as follows: "You Know Me Al," 1916; "Gullible's Travels," 1917; "The Big Town," 1921; "How to Write Short Stories," 1924; "What of It?" 1925, and "The Love Nest," 1926. And I advise readers who wish to know the humor and temper of our times to do likewise. It is quite possible that ten years hence these stories will be sought for as the tales that O. Henry wrote in Texas are sought for, or the tales that O. Henry's master, Kipling, wrote before he came out of India.

I don't think the relation of Ring Lardner to Mr. Dooley is very obvious. Mr. Dooley was a humane Irish democrat, with a good bit of sentiment and an extraordinary talent for commenting shrewdly and justly on public men and public events. Ring Lardner is distinctly of a later generation. He gives himself out a Republican and an Episcopalian; but as the hero of one of his tales would say, "What of it?" He is far less interested in "The Congressional Record" than in the life of Hecuba.

Like Mark Sullivan and many of the rest of us, he is the survivor of a period of overfeeding on public events, and he is "fed up" on the idealism which was once supposed to animate the engineers of public events. From long association with "athaletes," sporting men, and journalists, he has become a hard-boiled realist. He concentrates his attention upon the motive which animates the individual "critter" in the pursuit of happiness. He explores, observes, listens, records in that hard, dry, disillusioned, unsparing mood which has given us our post-bellum vision of Main Street and Babbitt. He is the hardest and leanest of contemporary wits. For our generation, that, as Sarah E. Spooldripper would say, is "part of his charm."

From observation, I know that he impresses many people as a tremendously amusing fellow. I have seen readers struggling through "Gullible's Travels" and "The Big Town" in a suffocation of laughter. He understands perfectly how to "get" people who read with their diaphragms. These extravagant effects of hilarity he produces mostly by the professional humorist's bag of tricks: mis-spellings, grammatical stumblings, malapropisms, false idioms, grotesque similes and metaphors, imaginative extravagances, slang, ironies and sarcasm. Taken one at a time, his gags might be mistaken for George Ade's or O. Henry's or Mark Twain's; and as a provoker of thoughtless mirth Ring Lardner has hardly gone beyond any one of these.

But somewhat to my surprise, after I had finished reading consecutively six volumes of his work, I wasn't thinking of Lardner as a mirth-maker but as a sardonic satirist with a grip on his characters cruelly hard. This

picturesque, garrulous, slovenly speech which he imputes to most of his persons is not a mere transcription of the vulgar tongue, it is an artful selection from the popular speech, craftily employed in the business of evisceration. It reflects popular culture in the third decade of the twentieth century. It reflects the snobbishness of the climbing illiterate proletarian, a man in whom the universal school-marm has wakened a sense of the possibilities of linguistic sin without effectively demonstrating the way to salvation. It is a whip of small cords to scourge American roughnecks, whether on the ball field, in the prize ring, on the golf links, or at the bridge table.

The first of these books, "You Know Me Al," is a full length self-portrait of a baseball player in a series of letters sent by him to his pal in Terre Haute, Indiana. It is very amusing until one begins to reflect what a typical and symbolical figure the satirical rogue of an author has contrived to make of his hero, Jack Keefe. Then it begins to make one uneasy and introspective—like George Meredith's "Egoist"!

For the original of Jack, as the author declares in a quizzing preface, was "not a ball player at all, but Jane Addams, of Hull House, a former Follies girl"—a statement in which there is this much truth: Jack is a gross bulk of human nature, who would retain all his essential points of interest if he were exhibited as an iceman aspiring to be a sausage manufacturer, rather than a "busher" aspiring to hold down a position with the White Sox. There are some technical points, to be sure, to please the baseball fan; but in this first book Mr. Lardner is already cutting deep into the "universal" in-

terest of his material. What he gives us is the all-American "boob," two-fisted, pig-headed, a liar, braggart in victory, whining in defeat, greedy for money, callous, brutal, intemperate in food and drink, and gorgeously pleased with himself in every relation of life.

"Gullible's Travels" takes its title from the story of a trip to Palm Beach and a sojourn at an expensive hotel. "The Big Town" recites "the adventures of a man and his wife and his sister-in-law, who move to New York from a small Middle Western city," with a view to marrying off the sister-in-law. "What of It?" is a miscellany of humorous sketches. In general the three books depict not "athaletes" and professional sport, but "society," as discoverable by a pair with means sufficient to rent an apartment at $4,000 a year.

Yet on the whole the note of these social pictures is hardly distinguishable from the note of the "busher's" letters to Al. The men and women depicted have "pulled down" enough to live on and are ready to break into a world where people "know how to live," but everywhere they go they seem to fall in with other bored and vapid persons precisely like themselves, hopelessly at a loss to fill the awful intervals between meals. The narrator has his little jibes at "the wife" or "the Mrs." and "the kiddies." The family "climbs" industriously among the waiters and the bellboys. He and the Mrs. are both hit by "the society bacillus." He puts on "the soup and fish" in order to mingle with "the high polloi." She trembles "like an aspirin leaf." Both of them employ the preposition "of" as an auxiliary verb. Yet doubtless "If we'd of had any idear what we was doin' we'd of never did it."

In the preface to "How to Write Short Stories" Mr. Lardner clowned it like Don Marquis's Old Soak. "A little group of our deeper drinkers has suggested that maybe boys and gals who want to take up writing as their life work would be benefited if some person like I was to give them a few hints in regards to the technic of the short story, how to go about planning it and writing it, when and where to plant the love interest and climax and finally how to market the finished product without leaving no bad taste in the mouth."

After ten pages of professional fooling in this vein Mr. Lardner produced ten of the best stories published in 1924—all of them, in my opinion, memorable, and particularly these: "Some Like Them Cold," "Alibi Ike," "The Golden Honeymoon," "Champion," "My Roomy" and "Harmony." They are all memorable because the story in each develops with a kind of inevitability out of a character to whom the author religiously listens, but with whom he does not meddle, no matter how cruel or mad or merely humdrum the predestined course of events may be.

In his new collection, "The Love Nest," he gives a parallel performance. There is first a humorous introduction by Sarah E. Spooldripper—a creation suggested to Mr. Lardner, I suppose, by Katy Leary, the old servant in the Clemens family, who last fall supplied the material for "A Lifetime With Mark Twain." "Miss Spooldripper," as a footnote informs us, "lived with the Lardners for years and took care of their wolf. She knew all there was to know about Lardner, and her mind was virtually a blank. It was part of her charm." She

supplies a few pages of comment on Mr. Lardner's personal habits and on the tales in the book.

After this prologue in motley follow nine little tales of an expert and sophisticated objectivity. Every one who is expecting Ring Lardner to become a "serious" writer in Babe Ruth's class will be pleased with this exhibition of major league form. The first tale presents ennui and drunken humor. The second is a tale, heard in a barber's chair, about a murderous humor. The third is the heartless humor of a nurse, heard by a patient in the hospital. The fourth is the humor of a ball player ruined by women. The fifth is the humor of a theatrical producer embarrassed by the synchronous devotion of his wife and his mistress and the need of two instead of one string of pearls. The sixth is the humor of a sophisticated New York family entertaining relatives from Michigan, the question being who is more bored, the entertained or the entertainers. The seventh is the humor of musical plagiarism. The eighth is the humor of Mr. and Mrs. Fix-It, who drive us to the verge of distraction by trying to mind all our business for us. The ninth is the humor of a wife whose bridge hand is a dramatic monologue.

Mr. Lardner's America as presented up to date is in the Ruskinian sense profoundly vulgar. It is vulgar because of the insensitiveness of those very real beings whom he humorously designates as his "puppets." I suspect he is perfectly conscious that he is depicting Vanity Fair, of which the note is spiritual callousness. That, as I take it, is the significance of the hilarious prologues before his two collections of short stories. The principles of his art require him to present with clean

objectivity a world in which twenty cocktails are required to prevent a man from boring himself to extinction while amusing himself. But when he has his stage all set and in order and the "puppets" dallying, his primitive western humor sardonically bursts through his "defense mechanism," and he can't quite bring himself to go to press without divulging his sense that it is impossible to take these hard-boiled Americans of his seriously. And that again, as Sarah E. Spooldripper would say, is part of his rather puzzling charm.

LLEWELYN POWYS: FIVE YEARS WITH THE AMERICAN INTELLIGENTSIA

I AM writing again about Llewelyn Powys because this book,* like its predecessors, puts a spell upon me, into which I should like to take my readers. But no English writer of the latest mode is easier to read or more difficult to describe adequately. His publishers make this essay towards characterizing the new book: "Mr. Powys puts on the mantle of that plain-spoken and humorous creation of Rabelais, Judge Bridlegoose, in order to deliver himself of his verdict on the United States and the American people. Readers of his earlier books will find here the same realism, humor and magical evocation of emotion with which they have grown familiar and fond, and a subject close to their hearts. There are many delightful impressions of celebrities."

That is honest, temperate and, so far as it goes, accurate—except for the word "verdict," which suggests a judicial utterance extremely remote from Mr. Powys's pure impressionism, and except for the somewhat excessive emphasis on the Rabelaisian note. I detest Rabelais for his stench. If Mr. Powys were properly characterizable as Rabelaisian, I should detest him too. He is no more Rabelaisian than Chaucer or Shakespeare. That is to say Rabelais is merely a whiff in this book, as he is in the world; and he will never be more than a whiff

* *The Verdict of Bridlegoose* by Llewelyn Powys. New York, 1926.

in any book that Mr. Powys writes—a whiff which, like the finely divided odor of a small wood animal when it comes from a long way off, serves to render all the senses more acutely responsive to whatever vernal fragrance is abroad in the wood.

Mr. Powys, like Nature herself, is a subtle and imaginative blender of many far blown whiffs. He is a skilful intermingler of many colored lights and varied moods and passions. To describe him, as Mr. Van Wyck Brooks declared when he attempted to write a preface for Mr. Powys's "Thirteen Worthies"—a little collection of favorite authors from Chaucer to Hardy—"we need a word which, like a Chinese ideogram, conveys a complex mental picture and touches in a flash the springs of the five senses."

What most captivates me in this, as in all his books, is the lambency of his imagination, which leaps from crag to crag like "live lightning" and illuminates a whole range of experience at the summits. In one chapter the illumination bursts over his father's house in Dorsetshire till the startled mice squeal and romp in the wainscot tunnels, then it falls on Patchin Place in Greenwich Village, on Russian Hill in San Francisco, on a party of literati circling around Mr. Dreiser, on a breathless peak in the Rockies, on a little strand under the Liberty Statue, and again on the Dorset downs. This flashing from point to point, characteristic of the traveler's imagination, is observable not only in the book as a whole but within the short space of a paragraph: so that, for example, one swift zigging flash reveals the round-bellied Rotarians of the Bohemian Club ecstasying themselves over R. L. S. under the California redwoods, leaps

two thousand years, to show dawn warming the same rosy bark on the Crucifixion morning, picks out John Muir tossing all night in a hurricane at the top of one of these trees, and then with another wild leap darts from the beard of Muir to the beard of Saul, light-smitten on the road to Damascus. The effect is steadily of imaginative liberation. One grows elate with a sense of wings, wide spaces, lifting horizons.

I foresee that "The Verdict of Bridlegoose" will, for the most part, be presented to the public as a light volume, well sprinkled with extractable plums. My enthusiasm for Mr. Powys's art will be shared only by readers who perceive that the book is a subtle piece of composition, as full of poignant contrasts and strange harmonies as the music of Chopin. To do it full justice, furthermore, it should be regarded as the fourth *opus* in a series, of which the note hitherto has been as tragic as "La Marche Funèbre." Our fourth *opus* is predominantly vivacious, but it opens with a preliminary movement of restless dolor, which links it with its predecessors and which lingers in the memory through the brittle gayety of the literary banquet. In 1909, at the age of twenty-six, Mr. Powys wrote in his diary: "I am going to the doctor this morning. Probably I have broken some small blood vessel and shall be all right in a day or two. I cannot help remembering, however, those ominous words of John Keats when he spat blood for the first time . . ." ("Confessions of Two Brothers").

The lustrum from 1909 to 1914, spent in sanatoria and cottage retreats in Switzerland and England, is treated in "Skin for Skin." The lustrum from 1914 to 1919, spent on a stock farm in East Africa, studying the

music of the lion's roar and the hyena's howl, is treated in "Ebony and Ivory" and in "Black Laughter." The lustrum from 1919 to 1924, spent in the United States, is treated in "The Verdict of Bridlegoose."

There was a short interval in England between the African and the American adventures: "Never had I experienced a deeper discontent than I felt in my father's house at Weymouth after my return from Africa. Suddenly I found myself deprived of the two principal props upon which human happiness depends—work and love. . . . In the autumn, as I passed Lodmore, I would see the fishermen drawing their nets out of the sea, and walk on inattentive. The sight of cormorants, flying with outstretched necks toward the wave-marked promontories near the White Nore, meant nothing to me; the color of the rushes in the dykes, lit up by the last rays of the sun as it went down behind the Chesil beach, nothing; the winter stars shining upon the backs of Dorset sheep, asleep on Dorset downs, less than nothing."

Mr. Powys came to the United States in 1919, sick, shattered, disillusioned, oppressed in his innermost consciousness by ten years' brooding on the hostility and treachery of the universe. He had had a bellyful of disenchantment. He had lost his piety, his health, his power to work, and his last penny by investment in German marks. He might have borne these whips and stings with some fortitude, had he been able to regard his misfortunes as peculiar to himself. But his occasions for personal depression coincided with the long desolation of the war and also with his African sojourn. Thus, there was thrust upon his exacerbated sensibilities at

once the moral bankruptcy of human society and wholesale evidence of nature's ancient immitigable ferocity. The laceration of his feelings extended into his imagination. He saw the world as a rank jungle, blood-stained, carrion-scented, with little creatures and feeble creatures picking their food from the crocodile's teeth and having to look sharp to escape the elephant's trampling feet.

In sifting the memories of his American years the first object which impressed him as of artistic interest was the abject misery of a young, sick, penniless, unknown Englishman, trying to break into the "jungle" of New York. Though in reality he was a prodigal son with a strawberry mark on his shoulder and a fine great coat in the closet and a shawl which had belonged to Edward FitzGerald, he sees himself, in the earlier part of his venture, as a rather desperate waif among the husks that the swine did leave; and so he presents himself, with a bitter fullness of distressing pictures.

We see him, accordingly, dragging his misery about the city: waiting a half hour at the end of a queue in a downtown employment office; considering a job offered by a firm of Philadelphia undertakers; staring at a tiny white casket in a Seventh Avenue window, and, after roaming through the East Side, reflecting that for every waxen shape carried out there would be three to replace it; walking pensively past the three golden balls of Uncle Ben's pawnshop on Eighth Avenue; trying for a permanent lodging in a hotel that advertised rooms at twenty-five cents a night; interviewing direful landladies—"decrepit human alley-cats with knots of gray, unbrushed hair falling upon their soiled blouses, like the elflocks one sees in the manes of aged mares that are past work";

hiring a hall bedroom and hunting for tips on the writer's craft in a little paper called "How to Write"; getting $3.75 at last for his first African vignette; roving among the luxuries of Fifth Avenue with the emotions of a pariah or a hungry dog, thinking the smug lions at the Public Library looked like none of his African acquaintance, and wondering how it came about that "all these people possessed the faculty of adapting themselves to the requirements of an age for the meanest demands of which I myself felt so utterly unfitted."

Mr. Powys pushed through that gray curtain, after various tentative overtures, into an atmosphere, or rather into various atmospheres, so warm and friendly, so full of interest, work and affection that New York became to him, as to so many of the native born, the "enchanted city." What it says to the delighted heart and the imagination he interprets just as potently as he interprets its misery; and for five years the spell was upon him so strongly that he felt no desire to see again the stars shining on the backs of Dorset sheep, asleep on the Dorset downs.

If you encounter his magic for the first time in "The Verdict of Bridlegoose," you will read the book through —that I can promise you—and probably at a sitting. You may find that it tells a little more truth than you are ready to have published, that it violates several principles of good taste, that it is a little shocking, and that its social philosophy is as immature as that of Mr. Dreiser when he wrote "Sister Carrie" or of Mr. Dell when he wrote "Moon Calf." You will most likely find that it does not belong to the "literature of wisdom" but to the literature of vision and avowal. But you will also

find that Mr. Powys, like George Moore and Thomas Beer, has mastered the high secret of this kind of personal writing, which is to leave out all the parts which can be skipped and to include everything which a decorous editor would hint that perhaps you had better omit or at least soften down.

Here is a literary banquet all composed of hors-d'œuvres, salads, cheese sticks and flowers. Here are, as the menu advises us, "many delightful impressions of celebrities"—most of them living celebrities, called by their names, characterized in a page or a half page or in three lines, maliciously or affectionately, and, in either case, unforgettably. Here is a glowing impression of Edna St. Vincent Millay, to whom the book is dedicated, and here are Amy Lowell, Lola Ridge, Evelyn Scott, Van Wyck Brooks, Padraic and Molly Colum, Mr. Nock, Mr. Crowninshield, Scofield Thayer, Alfred Knopf, Theodore Dreiser, Horace Liveright, Frederick O'Brien, Carl Van Vechten, Ernest Boyd, H. L. Mencken, Paul Rosenfeld, James S. Watson, Symon Gould, who was the original publisher of "Ebony and Ivory"; Frank Harris, Hugh Walpole and many others, besides the unnamed and adored Iseult of Patchin Place, whose tea made all the winter warm and with whom Mr. Powys has now fled away to a cottage on the White Nore.

I find nearly all these impressions "delightful" and none the less because many of them are spiteful. Mr. Powys's spite is mostly of a candid, simple-hearted, transparent sort, purely impressionistic and instigated by such facts as this: " 'Ebony and Ivory' had been refused by Boni & Liveright, by B. W. Huebsch, by Knopf, by Seltzer, by the Sea-Gull Press, and I was at a loss to

whom next to send it until I suddenly remembered that Mr. Symon Gould, who had always, I knew, preserved a kind of romantic faith in my brother's genius, together with a suspicion that if properly directed it could be converted into 'yellowbacks,' had lately become prosperous through the publication of a small handbook on Coué." If he caricatures a publisher, it is for the sufficient reason that the publisher has refused a manuscript. If he praises a patron, it is for the sufficient reason that the patron has provided a good dinner or a trip to the Rockies. If he becomes lyrical over man or woman, one of three things is present: beauty, intuition or some rare grace of the heart.

Perhaps I had better reproduce a few of these impressions, leaving it to the reader to identify the sitter. Here is a poet:

Eyeing the company with the aggressive, narrow eye of some high-pedigreed bird, whose narrow head is large enough to contain only two thoughts, herself and her own expensive eggs. It always seemed to me that Miss ——'s personality was far superior to her poetry. She had the kind of bad manners which by their effrontery become good manners. "I am glad that you are not your brother," she said to me that evening, when I was introduced to her. And, in truth, the difference between my brother John's nature, incalculable as the nature of a "plumed serpent," and ——'s nature, so pectinated and emphatic, could hardly be exaggerated.

Of another poet:

I could never set eyes on Mr. —— without longing to go out into a cornfield to gather for him an armful of

red poppies. I would long for an opportunity to do him the simplest service, to draw water out of a well for him, to carry him bowls of fresh cream, or to sit weaving for him a jacket from a new-shorn fleece, white as a cumulus cloud.

Of another:

She was dainty with a daintiness that can only be compared with the daintiness of Queen Anne's lace or with the daintiness of a spider-web gossamer such as I have seen decorating the leaves of dahlia flowers on a September morning.

Of a certain novelist:

She kept green little paroquets in a hutch at the back of a darkened garret; and afterwards, when I read the writings of this gifted woman, I always associated these same paroquets, their testy temperaments and beaks sharp as darning needles, with the bitter, nipping style of their attractive mistress.

Of a certain publisher:

A dark, handsome man, who had the discreet, downcast eye and glossy look of an important Oriental official, who, after having witnessed the execution of Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, on a gallows fifty cubits high, was, in marabou-feather sandals, hastening to present the King and Esther with a bouquet of Sharon roses.

If you are making your first venture with Mr. Powys, very likely you will say that these impressions, though

amusing, are not very important. An intelligent friend who values Mr. Powys's work much less highly than I has tried to convince me that he has wasted an opportunity in "The Verdict of Bridlegoose": "After a five years' sojourn here, he might have written a substantial account of literary America from an Englishman's point of view. He hasn't done it."

No, he has not done that; but I think that was not his intention. Literary America was not his subject but his decoration. His subject was Llewelyn Powys. What he undertook was to make his readers see with utmost vividness what he saw and to feel with utmost intensity what he felt during those moments of his five years' residence which abide with him as significant for him. The value of the work is in its "subjective" fidelity. He is concerned with the truth, but decidedly it is his truth; and it is only the quintessence of that which interests him. That is why instead of giving us a quarto of 1,000 pages on the events of twenty-four hours he gives us but 200 pages on the events of five years. I find his artistic economy most appealing. It affects me like fine poetry.

GEORGE MOORE: AN IRISH EPICURE

A UNIVERSITY president, greatly perturbed by the manifest taste of his young people for the season's books, once asked me why the devil had all the good writers. I replied that I didn't think he had, but that I would take the matter under advisement and report to him some time why the devil had so many of them. The answer, after a little serious reflection, seems simple and obvious. Righteousness is a thing so fine that having it makes the possessor proud as Lucifer and consequently contemptuous of such minor accomplishments as writing well. Unrighteousness, on the contrary, or even mere moral insignificance, keeps a writer in a condition of spiritual humility, and thus leaves him free to concentrate all the fire in his corrupt carcass upon the development of "that one talent which is death to hide." This accounts, I think, satisfactorily for all the spiritual guttersnipes—like Verlaine and Rimbaud, etc., ad infinitum —who annoy university presidents and other more or less honest men by writing so much better, so much more like choiring angels, than the established clergy.

George Moore attitudinizes a bit, as he has always done, for the pleasure of making the uncomprehending millions lift anxious heads. He may, for all one knows, have a nice little kit of useful bourgeois virtues and honors which he keeps bright and clean in the actual conduct of life. But in his latest book, as in his earliest, he

proclaims his profound indifference to social morality; he boasts that the rule of his life, which distinguishes him from his friend Dujardin, is "to avoid burdens" and to shed "all responsibilities but one"; and he declares that for him, as for all artists, there is but one morality —"perfection of form." In fidelity to that ideal—in lifelong fidelity to that ideal—lies George Moore's virtue. And so great is the power of any ideal pursued with singleness of heart through a long lifetime that every one of George Moore's books that I have seen repays the study of the artist—there were one or two circulated so quietly that I have not seen them. At the age of sixty-seven he appears to be at the high tide of productivity, and is bringing out books which one cannot let alone, they are so vital with the latest, maturest aspect of his special virtue.

In a quite characteristically and, of course, very deliberately "outrageous" chapter of "Conversations in Ebury Street" Mr. Moore combines an intimate account of "love's delight," as analyzed for him by some woman or other, with penetrating appreciation of a passage in the Acts, which his literary intuition assures him comes straight from the hand and heart of St. Paul. Of this passage he says:

All the years he has lived and the self they have led him into are here. We look into his eyes; his breath is upon our faces; his words invite us into the very movements of his thoughts, of his instincts; yet the scholars have attributed this passage to something Luke heard and remembered! a criticism so crude that perforce it sets me thinking that scholars are but children in æsthetics, apt, in their search after grammatical con-

structions, to overlook the soul beneath, haggling experts, only aware of soulless externals. A cabinet-maker can tell at a glance if a joint be by a skilled workman's hand or by an apprentice, and writers of first rate narrative as easily that the farewell is the outpouring of a man's stricken heart, a sobbing that cannot be fabricated from a document.

Well, the "Conversations in Ebury Street" has throughout that quality of quintessential intimacy attributed to the passage in the Acts. All the years that Mr. Moore has lived and the self they have led him into are there—not in a paragraph or page here and there, as the later Mark Twain is present in his Autobiography, but in every page, every paragraph and every line. "Perfection of form" for George Moore means weaving a garment which will fit his personality at sixty-seven like his skin. The simple, loose, idiomatic, unaccented but infinitely studied style follows like a breathless shadow, barefoot and still, close on the windings of his musing thought. This style Mr. Moore has been working on persistently for years, through "Hail and Farewell," "The Brook Kerith," "Héloïse and Abélard," "Avowals," etc.; but the perfected garment he reserved for his own investiture as the epicure of Ebury Street, serving to his visitors the most subtly fascinating reflection that English palates have been invited to taste in years.

Mr. Moore's conversations differ from those of Plato and Landor in several respects, and notably in the fact that practically all the good things proceed from his mouth. Mr. Gosse, and Mr. Freeman, and Mr. Granville-Barker, and Mr. de la Mare, and the rest interpose occasional questions or reverently attend the Master's

musings, while he thoughtfully tears Thomas Hardy limb from limb, refuses even to discuss whether Conrad wrote English, explains the inferiority of Shakespeare's women to his men, discovers that Anne Brontë's "Agnes Grey" is "the most perfect prose narrative in English literature," declares "The Lady of Shalott" "the one poem whereby poor Tennyson justifies his existence," sketches an anthology of "pure poetry," sings a pæan over Balzac, distinguishes those who formed their "æstheticism" in the right streets of Paris from those who formed their "æstheticism" in the wrong streets, apologizes for incest and sodomy, appreciates St. Paul and George Eliot and thinks the latter's relative failure due to her attempt to lead a double life, welcomes the re-awaking of theology for its promise of bringing back illiteracy, identifies art with the conscientious expression of a sophisticated and fastidious sensuality, and remarks, with incontestable truth, that "boiled chicken has never appeared on this table."

"Our taste in art," says Mr. Moore, "purifies with age, and it may be that there is an advancement in our palates which the fishmonger does not take into account." Thereupon he complains that in London one can get nothing, nothing but soles, cod, salmon, whiting and the like; shad, "the finest of all fish," has not been eaten in London for fifty years; one has to go to France for it—or to George Moore! Still in this vein of culinary symbolism, he remarks, with a kind of tender regret, that Harrison no longer invites him to dinner:

My enforced absence from these dinner parties has brought my conception of myself, formed through

long years, to naught. I had looked upon myself as caviare to the general and a delectable dish for the few. And he that has acquired a taste for caviare never loses it; and he that has swallowed an oyster is faithful to the oyster to the end of his life; and as the lovers of caviare and oyster are faithful, so were my friends to me, but now, all of a sudden, things are different; for the first time somebody who once liked my company likes it no more.

The passage which I have just quoted comes as near the note of melancholy as anything in the book. I quote it because it reveals very well, under a little reflection, the secret by which George Moore in his old age, and indeed throughout a long life, has apparently avoided melancholy and most of the other high and deep passions which somewhere in the course of existence usually visit the average man. I mean that Mr. Moore has avoided the burden of high and deep passions and all their august appeals by reducing everything in his experience to the level of a palatal, olfactory, visual, auditive or tactile sensation—friendship, as here, religion, love and art itself. It is with him a matter of conviction and fidelity to principle so to reduce experience; and that explains, I believe, his otherwise rather peculiar vindictiveness toward writers like Hardy and Conrad, who almost alone in these later years have preserved the sense of tragedy. And that explains why at the Last Judgment, despite his enormous artistic versatility, he will probably not stand next to Thackeray but will be found sidling up beside that sentimental salacious eighteenth-century parson, Laurence Sterne—the two of them whispering, in the

presence of the Lord, their observations on blackbirds, chambermaids and rosebuds.

In his latest manner, Mr. Moore almost obliges one to meet him intimately or not at all; and I find myself prompted by his example to a slightly personal reminiscence of my relation to him and his work. In using the word relation I perhaps over-emphasize a tenuous bond; yet a relation, as Henry James taught me, is quite the most interesting thing in the world—almost any kind of relation to any sort of person. That Mr. Moore agrees with Henry James in this respect is proved by the very high importance which he assigns to any one—even to the, I suppose, not otherwise very widely known Mr. Husband, of Winnetka, Illinois—who has been so fortunate as to form relations with him by taking tea in Ebury Street. A relation, I should possibly explain, is formed when two persons become aware of each other.

Mr. Moore has now many admirers and imitators in this country, but he waited a long time for recognition of his talent; and when recognition came to him he did not appear to be particularly grateful; gratitude, being a virtue of the moral world, is not his talent. Though I do not lay the least claim to the "discovery" of Mr. Moore, as compared with most of my own contemporaries I recognized, I believe, relatively early that his life work was considerable, significant and deserving of critical attention. In 1912, at the time "Hail and Farewell" was appearing, I published in "The Nation" a succinct interpretation of his literary activities; and, in 1917, this article, enlarged to a forty-eight-page essay, was, to the best of my remembrance, the fullest and most compre-

hensive appreciation of his talent that had, up to that time, appeared in the United States.

In Chicago there is a bookseller who keeps in his safe two letters from Mr. Moore about that essay and its author. I have never visited this bookseller, I have not seen the letters in their original form, nor shall I divulge anything about them that has come to me through the unsolicited reports of various pilgrims to that iron shrine. But in 1918, Mr. Burton Rascoe, who has a flair for original sources of information, made parts of one of these letters public property by printing them in "The Chicago Tribune." From this now public source—omitting some rather florid references to the braying of a wild ass, which are not in Mr. Moore's best manner, having too high an accent, and omitting the characterization of my book as, from his point of view, the most detestably written book that ever appeared in print, which must certainly be an exaggeration—I take the liberty of quoting the following passage:

After reading his essay on me, I said to myself, it is strange that a man should think it worth while to write all these pages without trying to get down on paper a little of his own personal feeling, for there is nothing of himself in the essay that he wrote about me, and I know no worse way of writing than to write what people expect you to write.

If Mr. Sherman will read Pater's Classical Studies or Stevenson's volume entitled "Men and Books," he will learn from either of these books that the first business of criticism is to charm the reader by leading him into appreciations of beauty that he would not have discovered

unaided. Mr. Sherman depreciates ugliness in one essay and writes the ugliest book I have ever seen!

Having now established a personal relation between myself and the sage of Ebury Street, I propose to explore that relation a little, in order to discover, if possible, why there is so much detestation at his end of it and so much studious admiration at mine.

Why have I always admired George Moore? And why, for the last twenty years, have I given far more attention to his works than to those of Stevenson and Pater, which I had read pretty thoroughly a generation before he commended them to my perusal? I shall not have to grope for answers to these questions. I find an answer to the first one in the opening paragraph of my old essay on him: I have admired George Moore because he is a "born man of letters," master of the means for expressing whatever is in him, and "as beguilingly various in the moods and forms of his personal effusions as in the matter and manner of his ostensibly objective prose fiction." And as I glance through my forty-eight-page study I see that I have labored conscientiously from the beginning to the end to discuss and illustrate, with the most brilliant examples of his virtuosity, the fascinating flexibility and variety of his craftsmanship. And for my second question, why I have given in recent years so much more attention to George Moore than to Stevenson and Pater, the answer to that winds in and out with the answer to the first question; it is because George Moore is, relatively speaking, a man of my own times, an interpreter of life from the point of view at which, or near

which, most of the literature current in these days is written.

So much for that end of our relation. Turning to the other end of it, let us inquire why Mr. Moore has found what I have written of him so detestable. I may have to grope a little for that, because, in spite of all my study of his mind, I cannot be as entirely sure of his reasons as of my own. But what I suspect is that he finds my portrait of him detestable because it is true. In the letter published by Mr. Rascoe there is, curiously, no complaint that I have not put *him* into the essay; my fault, apparently, is only in failing to put myself into it. He does not complain that what I have written is false but only that it is ugly.

Well, if I had only stuck by Pater and Stevenson, the heroes of my college days, to whom Mr. Moore redirects me; if I had embraced an "æstheticism" which enjoins us to live always, like exquisite amateurs, with beauty, and to reject all the rest as dross and débris—if I had done this, I should never have read Mr. Moore and perhaps I might have written a suave and beautiful book. But Mr. Moore was one of the significant men of letters in my time. He seduced me from my earlier allegiance to Victorian romanticism and Victorian classicism. I read him, and I paid the penalty. I succumbed in some degree to the fascination of the naturalistic art which he practices. From him, more distinctly than from any one else, I learned a certain relish for the ugly; and from him I acquired some understanding of the indispensability of cruelty in any veracious piece of characterization; and from him I gained much of my sense of the diabolical fun of pretending to tell "the whole

truth." When I set myself the task of painting his portrait I could conceive no more fitting tribute to the power of his "æstheticism" upon me than to paint him as he paints his own friends—at frequent risk of losing them —remorselessly, with purring admiration, and velvety cat's paw pats, and deep, indelible scratches of truth.

WALTER DE LA MARE

Walter de la Mare captivates certain kinds of children and certain kinds of grown people. I am one of the grown people whom he captivates. Until I learned to my surprise quite recently that there are some ears deaf to his piping I made little effort to understand why I read and reread his poems, mainly to myself for my own satisfaction—only very rarely, like an indiscreet lover with the letters of his mistress, venturing to share a fragment with a proved friend. After the chill, however, of hearing an acquaintance mention them without emotion, I have gone through them again, asking myself from point to point whether I was really in love with them or merely infatuated. I have decided that I am really in love. The way I know it is because they make me very happy, which is far from being an easy task. They make me happy by putting me in a quite "blessed" mood of appreciation for all manner of shy and lovely things and beings which, except when I am in that mood, "knock on my hardened heart in vain."

Mr. Mégroz * is, as Juliet's nurse might say, just in my case, only, in addition to being a lover of Mr. de la Mare, he is a knight errant, setting lance in rest and challenging all comers to combat a series of rather striking propositions regarding the excellence and importance of his work. He knows well both the prose and the verse,

* *Walter de la Mare* by R. L. Mégroz. New York, 1924.

exhibits admirable specimens of it, feels deeply its special qualities and praises the right things with ardor, yet generally with discretion. As a piece of interpretation the book cannot fail to be of service to the poet by multiplying readers with reasons for the faith that is in them. The best reason for faith, as I have intimated, is joy, which is undebatable. In addition to this, Mr. Mégroz maintains, with arguments, that Walter de la Mare is one of a very small group of living writers "who are definitely major and not minor poets." To buttress this position he seeks to show that the range of his author is far wider and his substance far more "sound" than is ordinarily recognized. In conclusion he prophesies that we are in for a "new romanticism," of which Walter de la Mare is the morning star.

Early in the book I had a suspicion that Mr. Mégroz himself did not quite understand the usefulness of his two chapters of personal impressions and biography. This curious notion was due to his saying that when he visited Mr. de la Mare he "fully expected to find some kind of Swinburnian eccentricity about the haunted poet of 'The Listeners.' Surely he would be discovered amid a wild litter of manuscript, with flaming eyes and floating hair, or the equivalent of these!" That was a very erroneous conception on the biographer's part, and the shock of his disillusionment may suggestively be compared with the shock which some readers feel when they think of their spiritual Hawthorne accurately weighing coal in Boston Harbor or British matrons in England. Instead of a wild-eyed rhapsodist, he found a man with the figure of a Kentish yeoman, square built, solid looking, hard thinking—a smiling and cheerful man, health-

ily surrounded by a wife and numerous children—a man with solid Huguenot ancestors, who hadn't been molded by a university, but after a literary adolescence at St. Paul's Cathedral School had stepped at Easter, 1890, into the city office of the Anglo-American Oil Company, where he remained for eighteen years, spending the flower of his days in the department of statistics.

Now, you may say that this biographical sketch is irrelevant because it explains nothing; or you may say that it is poignantly pertinent because it explains everything. The old way of criticism at a point like this was to bring in Robert Burns, the gauger of ale, and cry, "Alas! Alas! How the world treats its wingèd things!" The new way of criticism is to bring in psycho-analytic theory and explain a man's literary performances as the expression of his suppressed desires; and if forcing poets to weigh coal, gauge ale and manipulate statistics of the Anglo-American Oil Company is the only means by which they can be made to confess their desire for the banks and braes of bonnie Doon and their delight in travelers knocking on the moonlit door, then perhaps we must cease to regard the grimy world as a malefactor. Mr. Mégroz boldly follows the new method of interpretation. He regards Walter de la Mare as pre-eminently a poet of "suppressed desires" and as pre-eminent among poets of "dream life." Certainly one couldn't ask a better "case" for the operation of psycho-analysis than that of this statistician of the Anglo-American Oil Company.

No reader can question, I suppose, the abundance and the variety of Mr. de la Mare's creative reveries. And one may, without anxiety, admit the picturesqueness and

the piquancy of his decorative scheme, with the old Tudor house in the park, the little red sun in the icy pool, the ragged rooks cawing across the wood, and the fairies in their crimson cloaks skipping over the sparkling snow to the green light under the sycamore tree. What needs a little arguing, perhaps, is whether these fears and fancies of childhood, these phantasies of the night, these desire-begotten visions of the day possess any validity for the fully awakened adult mind. Wasn't it in Pope's time some one sternly declared that tales of knights and enchanters could charm an "understanding age" no more? And when we have dallied for a while with these pretty archaisms, shall we not have to leave Mr. de la Mare and Mr. W. B. Yeats, too, and Lord Dunsany, with the old women telling tales by the fire, and with Poe and Hawthorne and Coleridge, whose flowers grew too much in the shade—and with the creator of Puck and the dirge in "Cymbeline"?

By widening my question I have partly answered it; there are all kinds of dreams, good dreams and bad dreams, dreams that cannot abide the crowing of the cock, and dreams that linger like a charmèd sunset—for years and years. As for fairies, we must not forget that the experience of a person who thinks he has seen a fairy is just as real experience as if he had seen it, and therefore comes within the domain of the most realistic psychology. Still, one must admit that there are dreams which have a human center, and dreams which have none; dreams which do not satisfy our desire but detract from life by inviting us to "escape" from it, and dreams which do satisfy our desire by completing our lives as light and darkness in happy mixture complete and clothe

an else too solid body. To which class do the dreams of Mr. de la Mare belong?

Mr. Mégroz attacks the question with spirit, dismisses the crude theory which reduces all dreaming to unsatisfied sexual desire, and traces in the work of his author an evolution of the imagination from the stirrings of ancestral memory, through the yearning for a lost paradise and the longing for atonement, to a point at which the poet's constructive faculty is dealing directly with the "realities of life." In conclusion, he contends that Mr. de la Mare has outgrown his delightful but juvenile yearnings for the lutes and forests of Arabia. In many of his later poems, in many passages of his prose, he emerges beyond the "province of the regressive dream," with its idle nostalgia for the Golden Age. His imagination has ethical content. He shows himself "the self-controlled, strong-charactered descendant of Huguenots and Scottish ministers."

One resents a little the intrusion of these Huguenots and those Scottish ministers upon this enchanted scene. We have so many of those dour individuals! Some of them have made us so unhappy! And Mr. de la Mare's special virtue is so far from theirs! He depends so little upon precept and so much upon cultivating delight in innocence, wonder and awe. His "application of ideas to life" is so persuasively indirect—so much a matter of merely creating a scene and an atmosphere in which the heart and the children of the heart can be happy. Yet what Mr. Mégroz says about the evolution of his imagination from the Arcadian to the ethical type is very interesting, and some of it is doubtless true.

It is true that if Mr. de la Mare's work stands long

and high, as I think it will, its virtue will not be found solely or even chiefly in its fantastic elements, but in its lovely reality and in the power which his incantations have to liberate in us those deeply buried treasures of sympathy, tenderness and joy over which, in the ordinary intercourse of half-articulate mankind, our fears sit like dragon wardens.

In the "Memoirs of a Midget," for example, the fantasy riots in elaboration and catches its own wings in the intricate webs which it spins over every pathway. What justifies entering its labyrinth is the plunging moonbeams of pure spiritual insight, like that exquisite oft-quoted catechism, in which the child learns from her mother that to make things out of her power and love, as God made the forests and the birds in the sky, is the only thing in life that is really worth doing. Almost equal to that is the delicious and profound unconscious humor of Pollie's letter to the Midget, thanking her for the cradle and the chest of tools which she and her husband have received as wedding presents: "Will have been a carpenter since he was a boy but there's things there miss he says he never heard on in his born days but will be extremely useful when he comes to know what for."

Mr. Mégroz is quite right in regarding the prose of his author as an extension of the domain of his poetical imagination. Here is a passage from "The Almond Tree" in "The Riddle," marked with just those qualities which cry "come hither" in the best of his verse. It describes the finding of the body of a man who has committed suicide, after long quarreling with his wife. The scene is presented through the eyes of his little son:

I felt no sorrow, but stood beside the body, regarding it only with deep wonder and a kind of earnest curiosity, yet perhaps with a remote pity, too, that he could not see me in the beautiful morning. His gray hand lay arched in the snow, his darkened face, on which showed a smear of dried blood, was turned away a little as if out of the oblique sunshine. I understood that he was dead, was already loosely speculating on what changes it would make; how I should spend my time; what would happen in the house now that he was gone, his influence, his authority, his discord. I remembered, too, that I was alone, was master of this immense secret, that I must go home sedately, as if it were Sunday, and in a low voice tell my mother, concealing any exultation I might feel in the office.

Truthful, terrible, even "gruesome," yet marvelously moving—that contention of hatred and bitter death with the beauty of the morning and the deep wonder and earnest curiosity of a child standing there, with his irrepressible secret exultations, in the bright snow and the oblique sunshine. What "does the trick"—suddenly lifts the sordid scene to the level of tragic adequacy and bathes it in a "glimmering peace"? Isn't it the subtly communicated sense, in the midst of death, of the ultimate victoriousness of life?

The final reason why Walter de la Mare's verse, though dwelling much among shadowy shapes of memory and vision, is almost never futile and never depressing, is that it accomplishes this life-enhancing miracle again and again: first, the association of chosen ideas and images and then the addition of the "little more"—the glint on the oxen's horns, the bird's claw in

the crevice of the granite, the rose and then its shadow in the dust, the dull weed and then the perfume of the weed, out of which, miraculously, beauty is born in the heart, and one steps out of time and space into a quiet ecstasy and knows one's self for the moment in everlasting relations to that which lives forever—a still ecstasy intense with meaning, like that captured in "Silence"—

> When all at peace, two friends at ease alone
> Talk out their hearts; yet still
> Between the grace notes of
> The voice of love
> From each to each
> Trembles a rarer speech,
> And with its presence every pause doth fill.

EDITH WHARTON: COSTUMING THE PASSIONS

Mrs. Wharton emerged as a brilliant short-story writer in 1899. She seemed at once to be an accession to a group of personalities who at that moment were giving, in various fields, a sharp intensification to our sense of style. She seemed by "the quantity of her intention and her intelligence" to associate herself with the author of "The Turn of the Screw," with Mr. Brownell, with the portraits of Mr. Sargent, with the illustrations of Mr. Gibson and Mr. Christy, with the drawings which Frederic Remington was making of the picturesque young men who dashed up San Juan Hill after Theodore Roosevelt. Henry James in one of his playful letters declares that Mrs. Wharton is his idea of a "dashing" woman. But the quality in her which impressed us above all was her marksmanship. Since 1899 she has steadily scored hits, and at widely diversified targets. It cannot be said of the author of "Crucial Instances," "The Valley of Decision," "The House of Mirth," "Ethan Frome" and "The Age of Innocence" that she had learned in 1899 what she could do beautifully, and that she has done it ever since. Her banner seems still inscribed with the device which not all novelists carry after twenty-five years of production: "Up and on."

Yet here is Mr. Lovett * very respectfully, with coolly

* *Edith Wharton* by Robert Morss Lovett. New York, 1925.

qualified admiration, examining, analyzing, summing up Mrs. Wharton's work and explaining in deferential and complimentary terms that her long reign is over; that, in fact, she belongs, when considered with reference to the main English current, in the last decade of the nineteenth century. "It is among the happy consequences of her persistence in her original well-doing," he declares, with the iron hand of relegation in the kid glove of compliment, "that she remains for us among the voices whispering the last enchantments of the Victorian age." And here is Mrs. Wharton quietly challenging that verdict by the production of another symmetrical, flawlessly finished little masterpiece, which reopens the case.

According to Mr. Lovett, the virtues of Mrs. Wharton may all be conveniently distributed in three pigeonholes, as follows: Culture, Class and Morality. "The most superficial reading of her work," he asserts, "brings evidence of her absorption in the somewhat mechanical operations of culture, her preoccupations with the upper class and her loyalty to the theory of the art of fiction set forth by Henry James, of which the basis was a recognition of moral values." (This statement of Henry James's "basis" impresses me as quaint and misleading, but Mr. Lovett knows what he means by it, and, in his sense, he is not far astray.)

Weighing the virtues thus distributed, Mr. Lovett contends that Mrs. Wharton's culture, though richly extended toward Italian, French, English art, literature and polite society, is imitative and sharply limited; that, though intensely class-conscious, she is "profoundly ignorant of the relations of class with class, which is the

vital issue of social morality to-day"; that she does not understand the industrial life of her own country, and that she knows nothing of America west of the Hudson.

He contends that the upper class with which she is preoccupied is, in any case, "thin soil for the novel," and that in America the upper class is parasitic and transitory, not in true relations to the environment and the soil, and not fairly comparable with a genuine upper class like Jane Austen's, which, with all its obvious defects, is nevertheless "part of an institution, stable, self-perpetuating, permanent."

Finally Mr. Lovett contends that the æsthetic morality which Mrs. Wharton derived from Henry James and which James received from the Victorian æsthetic movement, is inevitably—therefore perhaps properly—received with impatience by a world which has reverted to barbarism, and which now sternly and realistically recognizes the battle for survival as the cardinal fact in human biology.

This is a formidable wheel to break Mrs. Wharton's new butterfly upon.

When I had read "The Mother's Recompense" I was not immediately ready, as an efficient critical cheerleader should be at all times, to declare that "every American," throughout what Mr. Lovett would perhaps like to call our proletariat, "*must* read this book before midnight." I feared that our proletariat might be disappointed; might find Mrs. Wharton's sociological vision lacking in sweep and vitality. But why should one worry so much about that? Is there, or is there not, always an abundance of new novels available of just the sort which the proletariat likes? I think there al-

ways is. But of *this* sort one is fortunate if one encounters two or three in a season, which is not an excessive supply for a class of readers who are less in need of a sweeping sociological vision than of precisely what Mrs. Wharton offers. This is a book which one can heartily recommend every American novelist to read before setting to work on his next novel.

What strikes one first in "The Mother's Recompense" is the perfection of the design with its dainty intricacies all so perfectly subordinated to its simple unity of effect, and the neatness and completeness of the workmanship. Here is a thing, one says, in the school of Henry James —the best period; without the master's depth and intensity of color, to be sure, but contrived in his manner, and executed with his finely intelligent stroke, rivaling him in brilliant little economies, surpassing him in the concealment of technical difficulties overcome and in the achievement of a smooth lucidity.

One begins these things with the invention of a nice little moral predicament. Morals interest us—Henry James and Mrs. Wharton—as Puritan theology interested Nathaniel Hawthorne; because they furnish the materials with which one fashions predicaments. One has to have a predicament in order to have a frame for one's social picture; and it is a point of honor not to make a stroke which we can't justify. Ah, here is a winning little predicament, with just the heightened flavor needful to commend it to these days: Suppose one's former lover wishes to marry one's daughter. (In "The Reef" it was one's mistress wishing to marry the stepson of one's fiancée.) Set the imagination to work: Under what circumstances might that situation credibly

arise? With sure sparing strokes paint your mother, lover and daughter into the situation; and your novel is half done. Set imagination once more at work: What are the three of them going to do about it? Think your answer straight through to the point of restored moral equilibrium; and your novel is not merely done, but finished.

"Where," as Henry James was so fond of inquiring, "does the interest lie?" With reference to the ordinary novel of commerce one specifies a newly exploited trade or town or race or one picks out a chapter or a character or a bit of social satire, and says, "This is what interested me." In "The Mother's Recompense" interest pervades the novel as the tension pervades a spider's web of which every strand is taut and indispensable. That is what Mrs. Wharton's French critics mean when they say that she has "form," and that is why she has been able to publish her novels simultaneously in the French *revues* and in the American magazines.

One speaks of the grossly obvious when one mentions the moral interest of the plot. But it should be emphasized that Mrs. Wharton uses her moral interest for what it is worth artistically, and for no more than that. She places her story within a conventional society, because she requires its pressures for the construction of the little hell in which she tortures her characters till they reveal the elemental nature beneath, which she, like Henry James himself, knows to be "terrible, tragic, perverse and abysmal."

In this case the question whether the mother will confess to her daughter or hold her frantic peace and acquiesce in the daughter's marriage excites an interest

quite inferior to the interest excited by the question whether the mother's impassioned opposition is actually due to incestuous horror or to normal though acute sexual jealousy. Mrs. Wharton answers the question in a quiet scene without conversation, in which she makes the duly sensitized reader almost oppressively and indecently aware of abysses of elemental passion.

I was much interested also in the way Mrs. Wharton probed beneath the conventional ethics of her rector. This good man when consulted by the distracted mother as to her duty in her circumstances replies first with stern and orthodox spiritual counsel, which Mr. Lovett may say was becoming to a Victorian clergyman. But he adds, more informally, as he leads the poor woman to his study door, that his advice is to do whatever she is convinced will best avoid "sterile pain"—counsel quite in accord with the sentiments of the un-Victorian nurse, Justine Brent, in "The Fruit of the Tree." In the earlier days of "The Touchstone" Mrs. Wharton used to receive encomia as an upholder of the "Puritan" scrupulosity of conscience with its enormous capacity for self-torment. If she ever approved torment for torment's sake, perhaps her French critics have laughed her out of that. At any rate I incline to think there is small comfort for the moral absolutist to be gleaned from "The Mother's Recompense."

To detect the various social interests and values involved in the story one requires at the outset a palate capable of receiving the exact flavor of the impecunious, fading, expatriated American society, clinging on the Riviera to the tedious respectability of the American rectory and to the stuffy untidy agitation of the Countess

Lanska's "pastille-scented and smoke-blurred drawing room." One must possess enough social experience to grasp, from two or three pages of such symbols, precisely what Mrs. Clephane, in the eighteen years of her European sojourn, has achieved in the way of "success in life." And one must be able, standing at this swiftly constituted vista, to take in, at a swallow, all that those eighteen years meant for Mrs. Clephane's culture, with their three well spaced sexual episodes which still stream their influence into her now solitary and drearily respectable life.

She looks back upon three men: a stodgy, unsympathetic husband who impounded her in Fifth Avenue respectability long ago, and gave her a daughter whom she left with him and his implacable family; the clubman next, who took her away on his yacht—the sort of man who is adequately characterized when one says that he had a habit of leaning over the table and recommending very confidentially a particular sauce for the fish; then—six years ago, when she was well on in the thirties—the temperamental, artistic and literary person, quite a bit younger, who first "waked" her, stirred in her the deep full capacity for joy—and left her.

After just a fleeting glimpse down this long vista one's problems of discrimination are immensely complicated by the revocation of Mrs. Clephane to America and her daughter's arms and by the consequent swift shifting of the scene to a renovated middle-aged house in Fifth Avenue, in which one is asked to adjust and relate one's Riviera past first to the old square-toed Fifth Avenue of a generation ago in the persons of one's old friends and relatives, and then to a quite new, quite different, inde-

pendent and rebellious, headstrong Fifth Avenue in the persons of one's own daughter and her friends. It is going to be exciting to watch that daughter: she has much personal style and she has much tenderness in her heart; also she has a studio of her own and a will under the same master; and when she wants a thing she goes for it with absolute indifference to anything that stands in her way.

Now, I don't imagine that Mr. Lovett's proletarian, fortified only by proletarian culture, would be able to do the imaginative work necessary to effect an entrance to this story, to say nothing of following with intense delight the flickering lights and shadows down the stream of Mrs. Clephane's consciousness when she wakes on the third floor of the renovated Fifth Avenue house and waits for the perfect maid to bring in her perfect breakfast, with violets. Mrs. Wharton excludes readers who don't care for "nice things," just as Mrs. Gerould does.

One can understand why Americans of robust democratic convictions should not think her leisure class worth writing about. It is natural that the large portion of our populace which wears ready-made clothes and uses golden oak or mission furniture should feel a smoldering resentment at her rather inveterate habit of characterizing a desirable heroine by telling where her bric-a-brac came from and describing the old mahogany and the antique bookbindings in her neighborhood, while the intelligent and educated assistant manager who wishes to reform the mills in the interest of the workingmen is rather sniffily observed, at the bedside of a maimed workman in hospital, as wearing clothes "carefully brushed but ill-cut and worn along the seams."

But in reading "The Mother's Recompense" I have repeatedly been reminded of the Saracen in the old romance who sliced off his enemy's head with so much dexterity that he left him standing. Mr. Carl Van Doren, who reads all the works of a novelist before he commits himself, declares, in his well nourished little book, "Contemporary American Novelists," that Mrs. Wharton's natural instinctive habitat is "a true tower of irony." If that is where she lives she can hardly be pigeon-holed under Culture, Class and Morality. Neither Mrs. Clephane nor her daughter is a prisoner of Class or of Morality. Both of them are ready to step through the conventions of their world and out of their class as resolutely as Undine Spragg, in "The Custom of the Country," when she discovered that it bored her. I suspect that Mrs. Wharton has been playing with her public and with her critics for some years and wondering how long it would be before any one discovered that "The Age of Innocence" tells just the same story as "Ethan Frome"—a story, in each case, of that battle for survival which Mr. Lovett grimly says is "the cardinal fact in human biology."

But in one case the combatants are so much better dressed. It is diverting to costume the passions.

ANATOLE FRANCE

ANATOLE FRANCE has died; and, since only two years ago all his works were placed upon the Index, we are permitted to infer that he has gone to hell, not without regret for the society of the saints and the fathers which he savored in the days of his mortality, yet not without compensation in the prospect of meeting with Aspasia and Thaïs and Lesbia and Dido, and of conversing forever with Aristophanes, Menander and Theocritus; with Horace, Virgil and Tibullus; with Rabelais, Montaigne, Voltaire, Diderot, Théophile Gautier and his own revered master, Renan—a name employed in our grandfather's time, like that of Voltaire at an earlier period, to frighten Christian children.

Only thirty years ago, I remember having been called into the pastor's study on the suspicion that I had been thinking for myself. The pastor, a mild Southern Congregationalist, reeking of strong tobacco, explained to me very amiably and gently that religious free thinking wasn't "done" any longer. Some years earlier there had been a little insurrection, but it had been put down. Its leaders had gone out, like candles badly snuffed, leaving naught but an ill odor behind them. Renan had once been a formidable name. "But nowadays," he said, "no one reads Renan, except for his style." It was perhaps the neighborhood of a similar pastor's study, and, at any rate, the environment of mid-Victorian Chris-

tianity, which prompted Swinburne, an English "neo-pagan," who felt Christ like a scourge to the desires of the flesh, to cry out against the drabness of his world and against the cause to which he imputed the drabness:

Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean,
The world has grown gray from thy breath.

Much water has run under our bridges since those lines were penned. The triumph of the pale Galilean is no longer conceded by our poets of the hour, nor does his influence appear to be felt as a very grievous burden by any of our younger writers. In England the Dean of St. Paul's confesses his faith in a trinity of abstract ideas which one associates rather with Athens than with Jerusalem. In France, which keeps no great man of whatever stamp long in Purgatory, they have been celebrating the centenary of Renan; and from the new book of a critic who has identified himself with opposition to "modern" tendencies, from Pierre Lasserre's "Renan et Nous," I quote this souvenir of Renan's death: "I was unable to continue reading the paper which brought me the news. I sought the solitude of the woods in order to pursue there, all day, the long revery into which it plunged me. None of the great spirits whom I have seen disappear has left in my imagination such a wake. The memory of that long revery, which assuredly was noble, I keep and shall keep always, penetrating as the warm air of that autumn day which it filled." That "Renanism" has undermined the rock of St. Peter's, that something like a revolution has taken place, is indicated by the—I suppose—almost universal feeling that putting the ban on the works of Anatole France is just an-

other of the harmless little jokes which the Church likes to play on itself.

But not without reason is Anatole France regarded by the Church as anti-Christ. According to some theorists, paradise was regained and the world "saved" not so much by the Crucifixion as by the renunciation, when Christ, taken up by the Tempter into a high place and shown "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," refused them. Anatole France tells us that on the day when he should have gone up for his *baccalauréat,* he bought a few biscuits and went up on the Towers of Notre Dame, where the lustful, tongue-lolling gargoyles gape at the city of St. Denis and St. Geneviève. Beneath lay the "kingdoms of the world"; and he did not refuse them: "There I reigned over Paris. The Seine flowed on amid the housetops, domes and towers, and the eye followed it into the blue distance till the silver thread of it was lost among the green hills. Beneath my feet lay 1,500 years of glory and great deeds, of crime and misery, an ample subject for my yet unformed and unpracticed mind to meditate upon." After eighty years of meditation, Anatole France died, so far as I have heard, as he had lived—a disciple of Epicurus, believing that if paradise is to be regained, it will be by yielding to temptation and avoiding satiety only in order to preserve desire.

This is what makes his recent swift conquest of English-speaking countries so remarkable. When my generation was at college only those who were exploring French literature at a considerable remove from the classroom knew anything of his except his Academy-crowned early masterpiece of innocent sentiment and

philosophy, "Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard." It is not more than a dozen or fifteen years ago that his works began to invade us in systematic translation, and when the invasion began his publishers would hardly have ventured to English such books as "La Révolte Des Anges" and "Les Dieux Ont Soif." We have acquired a taste for seasoning since then. Mr. May,* for example, significantly regards "Sylvestre Bonnard" as a rather pallid and uncharacteristic specimen of his author's quality, and in his behalf he takes pains to rebut the notion that Anatole France himself was any such Platonic lover as the hero. We accept all his "merrie tales" and are in the mood to relish the story of Mme. Violante, who yielded to her lover when Brother Jean Turelure showed her a fleshless skull and taught her how precious time is. In a very brief period he has won an immense popular reputation among us, and his fame probably rests with far more actual readers than either Renan or Voltaire ever had here. When he was dying, two weeks ago, valediction generally was pitched at about Mr. May's note—"the greatest living man of letters."

By what right did he hold that title? We have had, in English, more appreciation than criticism of him. Mr. May, though he is intensely and rather comprehensively appreciative, is not critically quite conclusive. Anatole France is one of the voluminous and various writers concerning whom one can prove almost anything by judicious selection and emphasis. Now, when Mr. May went to render personal homage to Anatole France, the Master plucking a flower placed it in his disciple's

* *Anatole France, The Man and His Work* by James Lewis May. New York, 1924.

pocket Virgil, at the passage in the Sixth Book of the "Æneid" describing the grove of myrtle where the shades of hapless, hopeless lovers wander. Perhaps this graceful act confirmed his preconception that the Master was essentially an elegiac poet, with these for his fundamental traits: "Indulgent pity for the follies and weaknesses of men, a poignant consciousness of the frailty and evanescence of earthly things (cf. the story of Madame Violante), a profound sense of the vanity of human endeavor, of the obscurity of man's destiny, of the *lacrimæ rerum*, the pathos of life."

This summary is in accord with Mr. May's selection of certain Virgilian elements in his author as his immortal part.

But it is impossible to account for Anatole France's conquest of puritan Christendom, and it is impossible to find consistency in the author of "La Rotisserie de la Reine Pedauque" and "Le Livre de Mon Ami" by reference to his sense of pity, pathos and futility. The leader of a successful revolution must be a positively seductive person. The sense of futility is only very mildly seductive, and the sense of pity and pathos is strong in the church which the works of the new Master seem so deeply to have offended. Anatole France is almost inexhaustibly seductive, but principally he has triumphed over us, I think, by the seduction of his style, which is peerless in clarity and musical order, by the seduction of his culture, which is as rich and various as the civilization that he gazed upon from the towers of Notre Dame, and by the seduction of his point of view, which is that of an immensely sophisticated loiterer in the Garden of Epicurus.

His prose as prose I have not space to dwell upon. Paragraph by paragraph, as every reader knows, it is the most perfect speech uttered in our time. Any admirer who wishes to defend the thesis that Anatole France is, after all, not a skeptic, but a believer in the divine order, should rest his case upon the Parthenaic March of his sentences, lightly bearing the culture of 4,000 years to a democratic world, in triumphant refutation of the notion that a great writer cannot hope to reach more than a small coterie of the elect.

As for his culture and his point of view, I shall quote parts of two paragraphs written many years ago, when the spell of this great modern pagan first rested upon me:

One escapes in his books from the shallow and savorless modernity of contemporary literature. He is a cosmopolitan not merely of the present year of grace; he was a citizen of the world before the Christian era. A leisurely aristocrat, polished, imperturbable, he has strolled with ironic smile among the neglected ruins of antiquity, and has reanimated their fallen splendor. He has walked under the plane trees without the city wall conversing with Socrates and the Sophists on the reality of our ideas. He has discussed Greek philosophy in the Tusculan villa with Cicero, has sauntered over the Aventine chatting with Horace, and has listened with bowed head while Virgil read to the grief-stricken household his divine praise of the young Marcellus. He observed the strange star in the East, heard the stories of Lazarus and Magdalen, and dined with Pilate, Procurator of Judæa. In the Egyptian desert he occupied a cell with Christian cenobites, in Alexandria he tasted the last luxuries of the pagan world. He caught from the cata-

combs the fervent murmur of prayer and the mysterious hymns of the martyrs. He has seen with a regretful smile nymphs and dryads and fauns at twilight scurrying through country woodlands in terror of the cathedral bell. A lover of masquerade, he has crept into the cassock of mediæval monks and gravely announced the performance of miracles, and has discoursed upon the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life, and has whiled away long hours on a settle in the cloister, splitting theological hairs with the Fathers. Especially he has haunted the steps of the Brides of Christ, irresistibly drawn by the allurement of their celestial robes, hoping, perhaps, to catch a drop of the spilled milk of Paradise.

And all this he has told, not as one passing through successive stages of intellectual intoxication, but as one sitting at ease and leaning indolently out from a casement in Elysium. . . . M. France seeks in general to tranquilize the senses. When I say this I do not forget the vein of cold salacity which runs through his works. In presenting the simian proclivities of men he maintains an air of smiling aloofness. He contemplates the troubled face of the world through serene leagues of motionless ether. He will report mundane affairs not to the prurient ears of mortals but to the gods of Epicurus, who inhabit the quiet above the clouds and winds and feel from time to time a mild amusement in the human spectacle. . . . "I have withdrawn my heart and hope from the miserable race of men. For they come out of the darkness and struggle like beasts in the brief light and go into the darkness again. All their achievements are but as the excellencies of worms differing among one another. . . . But I—I have learned the secret of your immortal calm. I have found that there is peace for those who are content to perceive and not to

possess the world. . . . Make me, therefore, a place beside you and I will tell you tales of men provoking supernal mirth." Thus one imagines him addressing the shining ones.

English-speaking people hardly know how to resist the seduction of this luminous style, this multi-colored culture, this Olympian point of view. In the United States Christian idealism, inculcating self-abnegation, duty, labor, spirituality, has seldom faced a really seductive adversary. When our traditional Puritanism has been assailed effectively—as it was, for example, by Emerson, by Carlyle and by Arnold—it has been challenged for the most part in behalf of a higher form of Puritanism, in behalf of an equally rigorous ethical ideal with structural elements of stoic philosophy, in behalf of a more intelligent self-abnegation, a wider vision of duty, a more humanly fruitful labor, a more versatile spirituality, capable of penetrating more deeply the gross occupations of the material world and "redeeming" them. Even our far less "spiritual" challengers—humanitarians like Franklin, Paine, Ingersoll, Mark Twain and the lesser brood of cracker-barrel "atheists"—have been mostly men with a strong sense of the duties and exactions of the human state, the duties and exactions imposed by acceptance of the life of reason. No really typical English, American or German apostle of a new and modern culture attempts to allure disciples with promise of a soft life. Even our contemporary Mr. Mencken, like his master Nietzsche, summons his followers to live "martially" in the presence of professors, ministers and Congressmen. Life for him, as for Mahomet, is a battlefield, not a bed of roses. His

yoke is not "easy." Except as it has appeared in an occasional witty but not very potent sybarite of dubious fascination, our neo-paganism has usually been tinged with a certain Nordic or Semitic ferocity. In Anatole France we meet with an opulent Latin heir of the classical antiquities, frankly seducing us with the promise of pleasure sweetened with pity and pathos, in a sumptuous banquet of delights. And English-speaking people, at least those of the younger generations, are showing themselves at present almost incapable of resisting anything which promises them even the most momentary delectation.

Sometimes I am convinced—almost convinced—that nothing can finally resist the full seduction of the rising tide of pagan hedonism but the Petrine Rock. The Church of Rome and its champions still stand fast in their ancient faith. And they are pretty nearly the only powers which oppose to the point of view of Anatole France a definite point of view of their own. In France Christian idealism has long been accustomed to formidable adversaries; its apologists are not, as generally with us, defenseless babes, going down helpless and speechless before the spears and banners of an overwhelmingly superior enemy. They study the invader: see him as Achilles, and find his heel; see him as Goliath, and plant their white pebbles between his eyes. The most searching criticism of Anatole France which has yet appeared, the best informed, the most appreciative and at the same time the most destructive, comes from French Catholic writers, whom English popularizers plunder without acknowledgment, bearing to the English public the honey

of their appreciation and leaving the sting of their criticism behind.

"Nothing is less gay," says M. Michaut, "than the laughter" of Anatole France. His "playful pessimism" has its source in the Lucretian theory that Desire and Voluptas are the father and fruitful mother of all things.

The pleasures of love leave a void interval; because they are transient, they are perhaps more violent—more sharply savored because they are ephemeral, but that very violence is painful. Hope which at times animates voluptuaries, at times deserts them; they imagine then the mournful end of the universe; they ask themselves if life is not like a disease, a leprosy of the planets; they feel the tragic absurdity of it. And above all they vainly mock at the candid souls who wish to be immortal and believe that they are; and they suffer atrociously from their incapacity. They are afraid, horribly afraid of nothingness. . . . "To be and cease to be! the dread of that idea makes the hairs of my head stand on end; it does not leave me. That which will not be spoils and corrupts for me that which is, and annihilation abysms me in advance. . . . As for myself, I love life, the life of this earth, life such as it is, this bitch of a life. I love it brutal, vile and coarse; I love it dirty, indecent, tainted; I love it dull, idiotic, cruel; I love it in its obscurity, its ignominy, its infamy, with its stains and uglinesses, and stenches, its corruptions and infections. Feeling that it escapes and flees one, I shake like a coward and become mad with despair."

Anatole France recognized one day, continues M. Michaut, "that certain moral, philosophical and religious doctrines, certain ways of conceiving life and

living it, were hostile to pleasure, inimical to Voluptas. Those doctrines he made it his task to refute and destroy. On the whole he has moved consistently to one goal. From the beginning to the end, with distinctions, here more delicate, there more cynical, here more gentle, there more aggressive, his work is dedicated to Desire and Voluptas."

M. Victor Giraud, one of the most scholarly and vigorous critics on the reactionary side, ventures even to attack that sovereign irony which for many of us is the supreme charm in the literary attitude of Anatole France!

What joy to feel that one soars far above the throng of crass and common intelligences! An egotistical joy, in any case, and more fallacious than one thinks. Oh! I know that to speak ill of irony in Athens is to incur the charge of Bœotian birth and a complete lack of finesse. But Truth is worth running some hazards for her. And the truth is, that continuous irony, the irony which respects nothing, the wrong which mocks, degrades, dissolves and corrodes everything which it touches, far from being a mark of superiority, is a mark of narrowness of mind and dryness of heart. To mock at everything is to understand nothing, and how often irony conceals levity, want of reflexion and dull contempt! It is easier to smile than to think! Do you believe then that, with all his talent, his was a lofty, large and profound intelligence, this Voltaire who has been the king of the ironists? Try to count all the things that he has not understood.

These criticisms of M. Michaut and M. Giraud are a cold and unsatisfying comment upon the great man of

letters who has just departed, but they present very well, I think, the reasons why the death of this "greatest living man of letters" leaves quite unmoved certain depths of our nature which were stirred by the death of Leo Tolstoy. We have in the interval somehow "debunked" the great passions which filled a lifetime, and supplied their place with little passions which fill with lively sensations disjunct moments separated by a continuum of ennui and sadness. Anatole France has been a great master of disintegration. I will give one striking illustration from his literary criticism. In the first series of "On Life and Letters" he remarks, in speaking of George Sand:

> Old Carlyle is very detached, for it seems that all nature has no other end than to throw two beings into each other's arms, and to make them enjoy, between two infinities of nothingness, the ephemeral intoxication of a kiss.

In the following article, in which he speaks of Paul Bourget's "Mensonges," he says that when he had read the last page of that melancholy book he turned to the page in his "Imitation of Jesus Christ" which opens of itself and repeated with fervor several verses, among them this:

> Be not familiar with any woman; but commend all good women in general to God.

What wonder that M. Giraud finds one man saying: "He is a corrupter of youth. In my time when a college man wished to emancipate himself he read Renan in secret. To-day, or rather yesterday, for there is a slight

change, he reads France. He is the legitimate son of the last Renan, the Renan of the 'Abbesse de Jouarre.' " And what wonder that he hears another replying: "You exaggerate! You are puritanical. There is no corruption where there is so much grace."

AN AMERICAN VERSION OF MONTAIGNE

I HAVE not often on my lips that pretty speech of the French, so courteous and so hollow, *Les amis de mes amis sont mes amis.* But the friends of Montaigne *are* my friends. I have never known any one who loved him properly with whom I could not quickly discover twenty points of sympathy and concord. Fie on me! How I minimize his virtue at conciliating and harmonizing men and linking them in durable friendships! To accept Montaigne is one of the three or four principal ways of accepting the universe, and to a man of my age and temper it is perhaps the most delectable. It admits one to a point of view with a wide and serene prospect, and to a mood which is agreeably various yet essentially resolute, and to a companionable quest for a life with "a pure and agreeable savour."

I am indebted to those old friends of Montaigne, Mr. Ives and Miss Norton,* for giving me an extraordinarily rich and full week with him. The memory of my pleasure is so lively that for the moment I forget how they shocked me and can speak only of gratitude. If you are not already among Montaigne's friends it is my duty to tell you plainly that making his acquaintance is one of the half dozen great experiences open to intelligent mortals. To a person of some understanding I should not hesitate to declare that the first week of life, the first

* *The Essays of Montaigne.* Translated by George B. Ives. Introduction by Grace Norton. New York, 1925.

week of marriage and the week preceding death are but idle and unilluminating periods of time when brought into comparison with the first week of continuous and intimate comradeship with Montaigne. Those three vastly overrated events are but incidents in the routine of our prison-house, each one adding new and heavier fetters to a more deeply dungeoned soul. But through intercourse with Saint Michel the minds of his friends are liberated and attuned for the celebration of a true spiritual birthday.

If I speak with some ardor of the matter it must be understood that the presence of the Montaigne is still almost palpable hereabout, in the neighborhood of Pierre Coste, Florio, Cotton and Ives.

A smallish figure, he is, this Frenchman, wiry, lean and nervous, and soberly dressed in his customary black, like his father, who he says was "the best of men." There is a drawn look about his eyes and lips, for he suffers horribly with gallstones. That, however, doesn't prevent his passionate hunting of the stag, which, overtaking, he beweeps. The crown of his head is quite bald and the surviving hair is grizzled. Commenting on the acuteness of his senses, he remarks that his heavy mustache retains all day the scent from a touch of his glove, just as in his youth, he adds—with a smile which is slightly wan—his lips retained for hours the fragrance of amorous encounters.

At his first approach his manner was a little brusque and rather cold and dry. As if impatient of ceremony and all preliminaries, he announced abruptly that he disliked sadness, and then plunged into five or six stories of broken-hearted men who had kept their mouths shut and

their eyes dry. As he talked his brains became hot and his speech quick, pungent, copious and personal. Of conversation, he said: "I find the use of it sweeter than of any other action of life." But that had not always been his passion.

His love of talking and writing of his own traits and tastes and virtues and vices has often been described as "egoism" and "vanity." But I think his unequaled presentation of his inner life to posterity is not well understood except by those who have meditated somewhat deeply on the psychology of the artist and the man of letters.

Montaigne was a well-bred man, carefully educated to take a French gentleman's part in the civic, military, religious and social life of his day. He had once been a man of action: a lover of many women; a courtier; a soldier, present at several famous sieges in those tragic and warful years; a lawyer; a member of the Parliament of Bordeaux; then for two terms Mayor of his city, and withal an eager traveler at home and abroad.

But along toward his thirty-seventh year he had pretty well exhausted his interest in the active life. He had run through the major human experiences, and had married and settled down on his patrimony. His mind refused to settle. He had enjoyed his profit of allegiance to the various institutions of his land. But the vitality of his relations with them had begun to wane. Apparently he was not tempted to any such overt revolt from them as is so characteristic of the intellectuals of our generation. The freedom which he sought was purely internal and of the mind. Yet toward State, Church, wife and child his emotions lost all eagerness

and passionateness—all personal sting. He wished, as it were, to retain all his "memberships" in organized society: to be a good Catholic, a good citizen, a respectable husband and father, but, to tell the plain truth, his heart was not in the business and his mind was not "on the job." He lived by proxy of his real self in the practical world.

The fact is that when Montaigne retired in 1571, at the age of thirty-seven, to his estate in Perigord and shut himself up with his books in his detached tower he moved out of his past, it became dead to him, it became philosophical data and literary material. Montaigne the essayist became a free spirit, without wife or child or kith or kin or faith or allegiance save to the urgings of internal impulses which bade him, with ever-increasing insistence, to know himself and to make known his discoveries. The self which he anatomized—more accurately, the selves which he anatomized—were as objective to him as the selves of his neighbors, and quite as subject to passionless, curious, critical scrutiny.

Essaying, as he used the term, meant probing, testing and weighing experience. A son of the Renaissance, he began his essaying where all the scholarly gentlemen of his time began. He worked over the vast accumulations of experience available in the Greek and Latin classics, his particular favorites being Plutarch and Seneca, and then the Latin poets, Virgil, Lucretius, Catullus and Horace. It is often carelessly said that Montaigne is the father and inventor of the essay as a literary form. That was hardly true of his original undertaking. He was rather the discoverer, after Petrarch, of the ego as prime matter for literary art. In his first two books, published

in 1580, he is obviously following models. As Cicero and Seneca in their epistles and dissertations gathered up stories and aphorisms and poetical quotations out of Greek literature, cementing them into a mosaic with an infusion of his own comment and experience, so Montaigne plundered both antiquities, and, enriching his colorful tessellations with fragments from writers of the Christian ages, set them, often not deeply, in a cement of his own.

But, after slight revision in 1582, Montaigne reworked and enlarged the essays extensively, and in 1588 published a new edition, containing a third and most interesting book; at his death in 1592, he left considerable revisions in manuscript for the posthumous edition brought out by his adopted literary daughter in 1595. It would be an exaggeration to say that the Montaigne whom the modern and contemporary world recognizes as one of its own children is disclosed in the third book and in the other additions, made after 1580. The truth is rather that between his first and his last editions he made great progress in originality. After he had been feasting a long time on the works of other men he realized that he had digested them and that they were his. I suspect he slowly came to the conclusion that he was a man as interesting as any of the ancients, and would appear so, if he were adequately set forth. He mastered then the art of self-portraiture, and gradually he acquired the courage to use it to the full extent of his power, with striking artistic consciousness of the vital values in the most minute details.

I think no other writer in the world has furnished us so fully with the means to know him through and through

as Montaigne. His originality among the men of the Renaissance is due to his discovery of the enormous excitement of self-exploration and self-disclosure. He first with tremendous emphasis of precept and example placed shamelessness among the virtues. If I were to single out the most significant single passage in his entire works I should take the fifteen or twenty lines in his essay "On certain verses of Virgil," in which he reveals his essentially modern vision of the requirements that courage makes of an author:

I have determined to dare to say everything that I dare to do, and I dislike thoughts even that are not fit to publish. The worst of my actions and conditions does not seem to me so vile as I find vile and cowardly the not daring to avow it. Every one is discreet in confession; one should be so in action; boldness in doing wrong is in some sort atoned for and held in check by boldness in confession. He who should oblige himself to tell everything would oblige himself to do nothing about which we are forced to be silent. God grant that the excess of my free speaking may lead our men toward liberty, rising above those dastardly and hypocritical virtues born of our imperfections, that at the expense of my extravagance I may lead them on even to the point of good sense!

In the French sense of the word Montaigne became one of the great "moralists" of the world by writing up to his professed faith in the virtue of admitting fully what he was. This expression of his faith, however, occurs in an essay which Mr. Ives leaves almost wholly in the sixteenth century French, because, presumably, of its "immorality" in the American sense. In America

it is often and widely held that the less commerce morality has with truth the better for her manners and her reputation. In America, and particularly in New Englandish regions, it has long been immoral so much as to speak of certain customs, habits and beliefs of men. In France, on the other hand, the word moralist is applied to an *auteur qui écrit sur les moeurs, comme Montaigne, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère*—an author, such as La Bruyère, La Rochefoucauld or Montaigne, who tells the truth about the customs and the habits of men.

In the American sense of the word—a sense which in recent years has made the word a term of opprobrium to the young—moralist means "one who moralizes, teaches morals." In this sense Montaigne can pass with us for a great moralist only after drastic expurgation of long tracts of his truth-telling about the animal basis of human nature. In many quarters it will be necessary to disguise, too, his assertion that the only end of human activity is pleasure (*volupté*). In still other quarters he will not pass muster as a wise moralist without extensive expurgation of his truth-telling on the impotence of human reason to fathom the nature of God or to speak with definiteness and finality of supernatural things.

In that great treatise, suffused with irony, on the limitations of human understanding, the "Apology for Raimond Sebond," Montaigne indicates the territory in which the humanist regards the search for truth as profitable:

Thou seest only the ordering and the government of this little cave, wherein thou art placed, if, indeed thou dost see at all. . . . Fasten thyself to that to which thou

art subject, but fasten not thyself to him [God]; he is not thine associate or fellow citizen or comrade; if he has in any way imparted himself to thee it is not by stooping to thy littleness or by giving thee full knowledge of his power.

And in almost the last words of his book, before commending himself, like a good pagan, to Horace's cheerful and companionable God, protector of health and wisdom, Montaigne declares: "The finest lives are to my thinking those which are conformed to the common human model, with regularity, with nothing wonderful [*sans miracle*] or extravagant."

Provided one suppressed all that is most characteristic of Montaigne's attitude toward the supernatural, and all that is most characteristic of his attitude toward sex; provided also that one veiled a little his obtruded hedonism—provided, in short, that one broke up Montaigne's passionate integrity and wholeness and completeness, one could easily pass him for an agreeable and indeed elevated moralist into many circles of American society. Writing on "Books," "Solitude" or "The Inconstancy of Our Actions" he is generally as decorous as Emerson, whom he surpassed in respect for law and custom. And then there are several famous discourses of his treating admirably of human relations which it is entirely proper to recognize and discuss, even in New England.

In the interest of education he remembered his own happy childhood when he learned Latin by the natural method and was waked to his studies by the sound of music in his chamber; and out of these memories he wrote for the Countess de Gurzon that wise and delight-

ful essay, "On the education of children," which stimulated Locke and Rousseau, and has profoundly influenced the entire subsequent development of educational theory and practice. He studied the charming relations which existed between himself and his own father; out of that experience came his tender, intimately sympathetic essay, "Of the affections of fathers for their children." He examined the prized, incomparable recollections of his perfect four years of comradeship with Estienne de la Boétie, whence sprang his impassioned and enkindling discourse "Of Friendship."

There were many other tastes and passions in Montaigne which belong to men of the nobler sort: his love of heroes, his thrill in the presence of valorous and magnanimous action, his fear of fear, his hatred of cruelty, his disgust at haggling and niggling, his downright devotion to plain truth and scrupulous honesty in the ordinary intercourse of life, his delight in solid authors, his discriminating enthusiasm for poetry, and, above all, his immense reverence for Socrates, which in itself is assurance that a man recognizes the godlike in humanity and can never become a cynic of Mandeville's type. He sees with regret that the intelligent men of his day "use their sharp-wittedness to dim the glory of the noble and generous acts of ancient times."

I do not dwell on the noble strain in Montaigne or on his possession of many classical virtues. They are what one expects in a man who has frequented from his youth up the society of Plutarch and Seneca, and has by heart the poetry of Lucretius and Virgil. Yet this strain of nobility is not his peculiar distinction.

Montaigne's distinguishing contribution to the moral

life of the world is rather the temper in which he holds his virtues than any one of them. The temper of Montaigne—all his friends know what that means, and they know that it means something peculiar to him, and for which he is the chief modern source. The temper of Montaigne is a mood blended of many elements—of self-respect and sensitive respect for others; of pride in the intellect and ultimate intellectual humility; of gayety in manner and fundamental seriousness of heart; of speculative openness and curiosity and practical moderation and conservatism; of alert responsiveness to pleasure and clear recognition of duty. The temper of Montaigne is "sweet reasonableness" taking up its dwelling in a man of strong personality in whom the rude force of individual motives and ideas has been subdued and rendered civil and urbane by habitual association with a thousand other ideas and motives.

Of this temper, so rare in the Renaissance, so infrequent still in modern times, one feels the quiet critical force most clearly, perhaps, in the opening sentences of his essay, "Of the Younger Cato."

I do not make that common mistake of judging another according to what I myself am. . . . While I feel that I am pledged to a certain manner of existence, I do not oblige every one to adopt it, as some men do; and I know and conceive a thousand contrary ways of life, and, unlike people in general, I perceive more easily the difference than the resemblance between us. I exempt another as much as you please from being of my conditions and principles, and consider him simply in himself, measuring him by his own model. . . . I vividly

put myself in the place of others, and I like and honor them all the more because they are different.

The slow growth and diffusion of this temper since Montaigne's time, its appearance in such various Frenchmen as La Bruyère, Joubert, Renan, Sainte-Beuve, Lemaitre and Anatole France, and in such various English-speaking men as Robert Burton, Sir Thomas Browne, Cowley, Locke, Shaftesbury, Addison, Charles Lamb, Leigh Hunt and Emerson—this is a long and charming story. It is the history of a fine flower of civilization.

Montaigne first came into English in John Florio's translation, in 1603, which Shakespeare and Jonson used, and which still holds a place of advantage in the Everyman Library; Florio is, like most of the Elizabethans, a free and often a florid translator, and he is often inaccurate. But, like the Elizabethan translators generally, he conceives it his duty to convert his French work completely into a contemporary, racy and idiomatic English work; and so, as Charles Whibley, himself a neo-Elizabethan, says, with obvious preference of the Tudor to the Restoration translation, "Florio's is a living book."

The second translation of Montaigne, that of Charles Cotton, 1685, was made by a fine poet and an experienced translator, a friend of Izaak Walton and a contemporary of Urquhart and Dryden, at a time when the standards for translating were high and Elizabethan prose had become thoroughly modern without losing the Elizabethan sineweiness, requisite to the interpreter of Montaigne. Mr. Whibley himself admitted that Cotton's version was "a sound and scholarly piece of work"; and the late A. H. Bullen ranked it among "the acknowledged

masterpieces of translation." Emerson's "delight and wonder" in his discovery of Cotton's first volume is recorded in his important essay on "Montaigne: or, the Skeptic." In 1892 William Carew Hazlitt published a revision of Cotton, correcting his errors, reducing his redundances, retranslating his paraphrases, and printing the passages which he suppressed. I have used this English version steadily since 1905, and am attached to it, because it affects me like an original work, while at the same time it is more accurate than Florio's and stylistically nearer to Montaigne.

Of this new American version it is necessary to speak with sharp discrimination. Miss Norton is an old and devoted follower of Montaigne and a pioneer student of the sources, evolution and influence of his work, antedating in her intelligent interest the direction of Montaigne scholarship in France during the last quarter century. Her introductions are pertinent, helpful, stimulating, contributive, charmingly written, and marred only by a quantum of firm New England prudery and an occasional gratuitous remark that an essay against which she is philosophically, ethically or religiously biased is "uninteresting" or "unimportant" or "overrated."

Mr. Ives is an experienced translator of *modern* French, and discovered the shortcomings of Florio some twenty years ago in assisting with the production of the Riverside folio edition. His criticism of his predecessors is directed chiefly to Florio. Cotton's version he dismisses in a single sentence as "marred by not infrequent unexplained omissions, generally of obscure or puzzling passages."

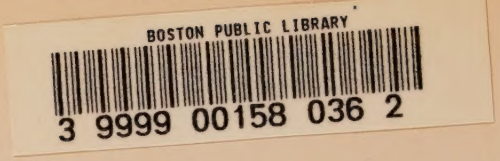
Mr. Ives's translation must, I think, aim primarily at

accuracy, and this, so far as I have compared it with the original, it fairly well achieves. It does not impress me as a translation of much distinction. It impresses me as distinctly a *translation* and not as a fresh appropriation of Montaigne. Montaigne is somewhat flattened out and rubbed down in the process. There are fragments of both Florio and Cotton in Ives, and the new version is marred by occasional grave infelicities and lumbering unidiomatic renderings such as neither Florio nor Cotton would have permitted to stand.

There is a graver and more astounding defect in Mr. Ives's translation. He leaves quite untranslated not merely the greater part of the "Essay on Certain Verses of Virgil," but every passage, I should say, throughout the entire work which might conceivably have brought a blush to the most prudish of New England cheeks in 1850. For English readers, the emasculation of Montaigne is complete and decisive. Florio was not ashamed, Cotton was unashamed, the late-Victorian Hazlitt was unashamed of important paragraph after paragraph and page after page which Mr. Ives restores to the original French. It is incredible. Montaigne is not a child's author, nor is this an edition for the "populace." Does Mr. Ives wish to keep all thought of sex from adults cultivated enough to care for Montaigne? Does he wish to persuade them that French is a nasty language, fit only for such matters as he confines to it? Or is he trying to stimulate the study of French by proposing access to these matters as a reward for the mastery of it? I give it up; and propose that henceforth Mr. Ives's version be known as the Fig-Leaf Edition of Montaigne.

It remains only to say that Mr. Ives's Fig-Leaf Edition

has several merits in addition to Miss Norton's introduction. It is based upon the recent *Edition Municipale* of Bordeaux and the "Bordeaux copy of 1588." In the work of annotation resort has been had to the scholarly textual and source studies of Pierre Villey, who himself incorporated the suggestions and results of Lanson, Zangroniz, Miss Norton, Strowsky, etc. Finally, and this is the interest which will draw the more deeply implicated students and lovers of Montaigne to Mr. Ives's four heavy and excessively modest tomes, Mr. Ives has adopted a system of lettering by which one can distinguish at a glance whether a passage is found in the edition of 1580 or 1588 or 1595; and so one can pursue the fascinating development of the complete book and the gradual full emergence of the author's personality.



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